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A CHARGE

DELIVERED TO THE

CLERGY & CHURCHWARDENS
OF THE DIOCESE,

BY

MANDELL CREIGHTON, D.D.,

LORD BISHOP OF PETERBOROUGH,

AT

HIS FIRST VISITATION,

May and June, 1894.

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I.

MR. DEAN, CANONS, AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FOUNDATION OF THIS CATHEDRAL CHURCH.

In commencing a survey of the progress of my Diocese during the past three years, it is a great encouragement to me to begin with my Cathedral Church. I trust that I may take it as a symbol of much else that has been done ; and that the visible growth which it has manifested in all the outward requisites for the performance of Divine Service, may be regarded as an illustration of the activity which has prevailed, in less tangible, forms, throughout the rest of the Diocese.

I have been privileged to see this noble building, which we have inherited as a mighty memorial of the aspirations of previous ages, endowed with offerings which tell no less distinctly of the aspirations of our own time. Twice during the last three years have we dedicated to the service of Almighty God, with prayer and thanksgiving, splendid additions to its beauty and usefulness. The noble shell, which has been restored with loving care, has gradually been adorned with all that is needful for that dignity of Public Worship which befit the Mother Church of a Diocese. This has been done cheerfully and willingly, as a thank-offering for spiritual blessings received within these walls, as a memorial of characters moulded into saintliness by the lessons of worship which this Church has taught. But the rapid progress made in this great work is largely due to the impulse given by the example of the late Dean Argles, whose life was an embodiment of christian zeal and liberality. The conspicuous simplicity and loftiness of his own motives were admirably fitted to inspire others. Though many have contributed to produce the result which now fills us with thankfulness, they would all gladly recognise in him the representative and exponent of their own feelings.

*In memoria eterna erit justus ;
Ab auditu mali non timebit.*

The name of Marsham Argles will ever be associated with the Church which he loved.

This increase of internal beauty is gratifying in itself ; but it is doubly gratifying when it is regarded as the sign of increasing activity. The sense of the needs of this Church has not only called forth munificence, but has endeared it to the Diocese at large. Its position, as regards the large centres of population, places it at some disadvantage as a convenient centre of Diocesan life. But recent years have undoubtedly seen that difficulty greatly diminished by the interest which has been taken in its progressive adornment. Many notable gatherings for Diocesan purposes have been held within its walls, of which the most important was the Retreat for the Diocesan Clergy in July last. I trust that this may continue every year, and become increasingly useful. I may say that I have received many testimonies to the inestimable value of those few days, spent in quiet meditation, with helpful direction of the mind to subjects of spiritual profit. For such a purpose, the Cathedral Church and its surroundings offer unique advantages, which were greatly appreciated, and added to that sense of corporate unity for God's service, which must always be the foundation of Diocesan loyalty and activity.

To you, Mr. Dean, personally above all others, and to every member of the Cathedral body, my warmest thanks are due for readiness to make this Church useful for every good work. I know that you are anxious to welcome every form of Diocesan organisation within these walls, and to make intelligible to all the great lessons which they teach. This Cathedral Church is, in a greater degree than most others, the Bishop's Church. This is to me a source of unmixed pleasure.

I know from experience the care which is taken, and the taste which is displayed, in the rendering of the Services. In the Dean and Canons Residentiary, I have a body of advisers, to whose counsel and help I much owe. I know that your aid is always willingly rendered, and you are anxious to co-operate in every good and useful work. I can only again thank you all for much that has been done in the past, and I look forward with increasing hope for the future.

MY BRETHREN OF THE CLERGY, AND CHURCHWARDENS OF THE
DEANERIES OF PETERBOROUGH AND OUNDLE,

The custom of Episcopal Visitations is of great antiquity, and like ancient customs, has lost, through social changes, much of its original usefulness. In times when communications were difficult, it was of necessity that the Bishop of a Diocese should afford, at stated intervals, an opportunity for appeals to his jurisdiction. The form of a Visitation still remains unchanged. The Bishop technically holds a Court, and, with his Chancellor, is prepared to

administer justice. The Churchwardens are summoned, as representatives of the Parish, to bring to his notice any irregularities which need correction. They are a kind of jury of presentment, empannelled to report upon the condition of their Parish. A Bishop's charge is in its origin of the same nature as a Judge's charge to a Grand Jury; and, in strict propriety, ought to be confined to a reminder of the matters which a jury ought to lay before him. This form of address has long been discontinued. Luckily for himself, a Bishop's judicial authority has retired into the background. His knowledge of his Diocese is not confined to formal Visitations, but is gained by continuous correspondence and equally continuous travelling. The testimony of the Churchwardens, and the reports of the Clergy are obtained in writing before the day of Visitation. His charge can no longer take the form of an instruction about the information to be furnished. It can only be of the nature of an address on some topics of interest, either in his Diocese, or in the Church at large.

Moreover, in the present day, the significance of any particular opportunity for expressing opinions has passed away. Advice is sought when it is needed, and opinions have to be uttered as they are formed. Their necessity is dictated by current events; and wherever or however they are expressed, they are rapidly circulated amongst all who are interested to know them. The time is past when it is profitable to attempt, in an Episcopal Charge, a massive survey of important questions, or to influence opinion by learned investigations which are more fitted for reading at leisure than for apprehending at the moment. I was at one time disposed to omit a formal Charge altogether as an unnecessary tax on my own time, and on your patience. But second thoughts led me to the conclusion that on an occasion when the Clergy and Churchwardens were assembled together, there was at least an opportunity when some simple words of advice might be of service. The mere fact of such an assemblage is at least a sign of Diocesan organisation, and such organisation must be strengthened and increased. The very fact that opinions have to be formed and expressed under daily pressure, makes it useful to record, from time to time, deliberate convictions, to separate the greater issues from the smaller, to attempt to view things in their relative proportions, and above all else to pursue the eternal principles on which all opinions must rest.

Before entering on any general questions, I would briefly call your attention to some points relating to the Deaneries which you represent. Any retrospect supplies material both for congratulation and regret. Many changes are noticeable amongst the Clergy, but I am glad to think there are few which have been occasioned by the hand of death. I would, however, pay a passing tribute to the work done, with rare constancy, for a long period of

years, by Mr. Thomas, in the Parish of S. Mary's, Peterborough. I know also that the retirement of Mr. Molesworth from the charge of S. Mark's, Peterborough, has occasioned universal regret. His diligent discharge of his duties, his readiness to help in every useful work, were the result of a high standard of conscientious endeavour. When he felt that his physical power was no longer equal to the continuous strain, he felt it his duty to seek relief, for a time, from work, which he loved only too well. He carries with him the sincere prayers of all who knew him, that he may be restored to health and strength, which will always be devoted, wherever he may be, to God's service.

If I turn to the fabric of churches, I find a most encouraging record of work done to maintain and beautify those precious buildings, of which we are trustees. The Churches of Longthorpe, Etton, and Harringworth, have all been put into substantial repair. The Churches of Yarwell and Northborough have had enough done to them to make them suitable for their purposes, and to encourage further efforts. The splendid tower of Oundle Church, one of the finest landmarks in a district where all is worthy of admiration, has been restored with scrupulous care, through the liberality and energy of Canon Hopkins. In the one centre of increasing population, the City of Peterborough, I have been much cheered by the zeal which has been displayed to provide additional Churches. One of my earliest acts was to Consecrate the Church of All Saints, which had reached a point when it was fit for Divine Service. It is now in the course of completion, and will soon be finished. It will be a lasting memorial of the devoted service of Canon Ball to the cause of God. There is also a project for a new Church in the Parish of S. Mark's, where the present accommodation is insufficient for the needs of a somewhat scattered population. I trust that when this plan has been carried out, the needs of Peterborough will have been adequately supplied for some time to come. Moreover, Peterborough has shown a good example in its readiness to provide additional buildings for Voluntary Schools. The pressure has been severe, and the difficulties considerable. There is still much to be done. But on all sides there is a good will to do it, and I am hopeful that all difficulties will be overcome. There is only one Church to which my attention has been called as needing immediate repair. That is the Church of Fotheringhay, alike conspicuous for its architectural beauty, and rich in its historical associations. It is a building which holds the rank of an historical monument; and I regret to find that the fabric is reputed to be in a dangerous condition. It is impossible for the inhabitants to undertake the work themselves; but I would express my hope that some steps may be taken quickly to avert further damage, and preserve a building of such exceptional interest.

Church and State.

The nature and scope of the general remarks, which I make to you, will be best understood if they are arranged with reference to an intelligible principle. We are all deeply interested in the work of Christ's Church, and are desirous to promote it by all means in our power. Of the general nature of that work we are assured; it is to set forth the Lord Jesus Christ. The means whereby this is to be done, He has Himself appointed. But the conditions, under which His Work has to be accomplished, change from time to time; and our duty, as Christians, is to try and grasp their full significance. For the ordering of the world is from God, and the changes of human affairs depend upon the operation of His Laws. It is useless to crave for other conditions than those which lie before us: it is vain to construct for ourselves an ideal of what the world ought to be for us to labour at our best: it is foolish to picture some state of things which we fondly think existed in some previous age, and act with reference to it, in the hope that by our action we may tend to realise it at present. It is the claim of the Gospel of Christ that its message is of eternal significance, that its appeal is to man as man, and that it is independent of outward surroundings. The Church must take its stand in the actual world, and must consider its relations to things as they are. Whatever may be the features of the present time, we have to look in them, not for hindrances, but for opportunities. It is to no purpose to deplore what we cannot do: it is for us to discover in what way our energy may be most profitably applied.

Now, if we consider the fortunes of the Church throughout Christendom in recent times, we see everywhere the same tendencies at work. The formula which is generally used to explain them is, that the political power of the Church has been steadily declining. I am not concerned with other branches of the Catholic Church, in whose history this is conspicuously true. But as regards the Church of England, we must admit that such has undoubtedly been the case; and it is worth while to appreciate the meaning of this fact.

First of all, I would point out that it is by no means a special result of forces which are working only in our own time, but is the result of a continuous process. The Christian Church was organised, from the beginning, as a Catholic, or Universal Church. There was no such organisation of civil society. When our forefathers in this Island became Christians, they entered into an organisation which existed independently of them, and moulded their institutions into some semblance of accordance with its principles. The Church had rules for its children, long before the State had laws for its subjects, and the officials of the

Church gave effect to the needs of a developing civilization before the State had any means of dealing with them. The English Nation was formed under the fostering care of the Church, which at first gave meaning to the State. But as its lessons were learned, it was natural, and it was right, that the organism of the State should grow as an expression of that natural life, and should develop capacities for dealing with its problems. I need not follow the details of this process, which consisted in transferring to the State work which had once been done by the Church; and this inevitable transference led to collisions between what is called Church and State, but would be more accurately described as collisions between Churchmen and Statesmen. It is enough to say that the excessive centralization of the Church under the Papal monarchy, put the Church at a disadvantage, in comparison with the State, as an organ of national life. The organisation of the Church was broken down by Papal aggression on Episcopal authority; the jurisdiction of the Church was upset by appeals to Rome; the whole mechanism of the Church was made cumbrous and inflexible by the paralysing influence of the Papal Court; and theological studies were restrained within the limits of providing arguments for that system of which the Papacy approved. Hence the Church seemed not only cumbrous, but alien, and greatly lost its spiritual force. The Reformation of the sixteenth century was an attempt to remedy a state of things which everyone deplored.

The consequence of the changes then made—a consequence entirely unforeseen—was a rapid advance in national self-consciousness. I have spoken of Church and State, and the terms are generally used as though between them they comprehended all the forces which are at work on Society. Really behind them both lies the Nation. The Nation means the people as a whole, with all their desires and aspirations; and by reference to their capacity for developing and expressing these desires and aspirations, the institutions, both of Church and State, may fairly be judged. The changes of the sixteenth century were due to the fact that the Church had largely ceased to be an adequate organ of the Nation. The experience of the sixteenth century showed that the State had equally failed. It has been frequently said that the Church has never succeeded in representing the Nation as a whole, and that Nonconformity has become a permanent factor of English life. The first part of this statement is undoubtedly true; the second part partakes of the nature of a prophecy, which it is our desire to prove untrue. But it is not equally recognised that the State also has failed, since the seventeenth century, to be an exponent of the wishes of the Nation as a whole. We may glorify Party Government as we please: we may explain it as the supreme discovery of English intelligence to

promote full discussion, and secure universal satisfaction. But the fact remains that no Government professes to give effect to the unanimous wishes of the Nation. With the growth of a higher sense of individual liberty, unanimity has ceased to be possible, and all that we can hope for in politics is the discovery of a workable basis.

I have made these obvious remarks, because their significance is frequently overlooked. It is an inevitable result of freedom that men should not all think alike ; or wish for the same thing, or pursue the same methods. The State is a necessary organ of the Nation, and has to accept these facts. Its action is the resultant of the organised forces which are, from time to time, brought to bear upon it. I say "of the organised forces ;" and I have no doubt that the most widely-felt wishes and opinions are generally those which are best organised. But no one, conversant with the complexity of human life, would regard the results of organisation, at any particular period, as undoubtedly expressing an irresistible desire. The most abiding portions of national life are too fine and delicate to be brought within the wide meshes of political programmes. Combinations are frequently temporary, and cries disappear as quickly as they are raised. A man is not necessarily resisting the national will, or impeding national progress, if he hesitates to accept an issue in the coarse form in which it is put before him in practical politics.

I said that the State was a necessary organ of the Nation for the arrangement of common life. It is so ordered amongst us that every man has an opportunity for expressing his opinions, and ventilating his grievances. Having done so, he must abide by the decision of the majority. All political machinery is an attempt to reach the justice and good sense which is contained in the breast of every man. To this we appeal, as the nearest approach to the voice of God, which can be heard amid the tumult and temptations of life. We trust it as being, in the long run, more unselfish than any other utterance which can be made.

But if the State is a necessary organ of the Nation, so also is the Church, for its object is to keep alive, and educate into increasing sensitiveness, that sense of righteousness which alone exalteth a Nation. It is only apparently, and not really true, that the Church is declined in political importance. There was a time when the Church competed with the State as the director and executor of the Nation's wishes. The State is now the sole executor, but it has become so by ceasing to be the director. It is avowedly the exponent, rather than the educator, of the national will. The modern State has maintained its supremacy by largely abandoning any responsibility for its contents. Its main concern is with mechanism rather than with principles.

This is a position which the Church could not assume. It is concerned with principles and with principles only. So long as the Nation, in a rudimentary stage of its existence, was agreed, not only about Christian principles, but about the modes of their application, the Church was entrusted with power. It is sadly true that the Church did not escape from the corrupting influence which always attaches in some degree to the possession of power. There was a period when it resisted the transference of its power to the State, which it had gradually educated to be a more suitable organ of the national will. There was a period when the State used the Church for its own purposes, to keep down a troublesome but sturdy minority which expressed some of the noblest principles of national life. There were times when the Church was so much engaged in outward things that she was, to some degree, forgetful of her great primary duty, and her spiritual activities were crippled amid political and religious controversy. All this, in God's good Providence, has now passed away. The Church of England has learned the lesson which God has taught. She is conscious that she is but an instrument in His Hand, and that He who has entrusted to her the truth which she has to teach, and has appointed the means whereby she is to teach it—He, I say, has also prescribed the conditions within which His Work has to be done.

What then is the result of His Teaching? What are the conditions which He has prescribed? God's Teaching in history is not the enunciation of new principles, but is a forcible reminder of truths which human frailty has thrust into the background. Man's weakness is shown not so much in his sins of ignorance or incapacity, as in his presumption, his arrogance, his conceit. He is always tempted to limit, for his own purposes of temporary convenience, the fulness of the Gospel of God's grace. He is tempted to improve, by human wisdom, upon God's methods. He strives to achieve outward success, and to imprison the spirit within the bonds of the letter. What the Church has been taught is briefly this,—that God works by influence not by power. The institutions of the Church were given her that she might bear a consistent testimony to the truth, that so her influence on the world might be steady and intelligible. Those institutions were permanent; they were raised above the changes and chances of this mortal life. But when they were invested with merely worldly sanctions, when they were allied with any of the fleeting forms of human devising, they were exposed to the same dangers as their allies. The Church of England has at present neither the power, nor the wish, to impose her institutions on any unwilling mind, or to exercise any other influence than that which arises from persuasion and zeal in good works. Such a position, clearly understood and frankly accepted, seems to me to be the noblest and highest which any organised body could assume.

Disestablishment.

It seems strange that, just when this result has been attained, there should still exist a desire that the Nation should repudiate any organ for the furtherance and expression of the principles of national life. Yet this is what the cry for Disestablishment really means ; and this is the main aspect of a question which concerns us as citizens even more than as Churchmen. As Churchmen, we can only demand that the matter should be thoroughly considered, and can only resolve to do our duty to the utmost as trustees to the great heritage which we think to be wrongfully attacked. But as Englishmen we feel a passionate desire to uphold the dignity of our national life, and prevent an immeasurable degradation of its ideal. That an ancient Nation like England should deliberately repudiate any organic connexion between the basis of its national life and the profession of the Christian Faith seems to me to be a calamity which could never be repaired.

The main argument on which such a proposal rests is that no one religious organisation expresses exactly what everybody desires. I have already pointed out that this argument would be fatal to any form of the State. Men never did agree entirely. There was a time when disagreement was inarticulate : there was a time when it was suppressed. It is now seen that diverging opinions are harmless and even advantageous about the arrangement of common life, so long as there is a fundamental trustfulness in the general desire for order and justice. On this trustfulness our political system rests ; on the belief that there are great principles of mutual goodwill which underlie definite proposals for altering the machinery of social order, and indeed give that machinery its motive power. Those principles are largely due to the operation of the Christian religion ; and its truths must always supply the nourishment of national activity. About these principles, in their bearing upon the formation of character, there is not much difference between Christian people. The differences arise concerning the method of expressing the truths on which these principles rest, of setting them forth to the world, and of applying them to the individual soul. I do not underestimate the extent of these differences, nor do I forget the historical causes from which they sprung. The differences are real, and their causes have created antagonisms which have penetrated men's modes of thought and feeling, and have forced them into an attitude of partisanship. But one thing is clear, that the differences themselves are about questions which can only be settled by patient enquiry and research, to which the spirit of partisanship presents the most serious obstacles. No one can maintain that that spirit of partisanship will be diminished by any action that can be taken by the State. The intellectual causes which keep men asunder would not be re-

moved by Disestablishment ; the causes which depend on sentiment would be indefinitely intensified. If Nonconformists at present are influenced by a sense of wrong done to them in the past, I do not see what would be the gain of extending a corresponding sense of wrong to Churchmen in the future. It would be a step backwards from that better understanding which ought to be the object of our common endeavour.

It is a misfortune, inherent in all human affairs, that political questions are rarely raised with reference to things as they are, but as they have been. Forces, which have suffered from unequal treatment in the past, are liberated, and are desirous of pursuing their victory to some logical conclusion. There was a time in England when the State decided that national unity was only possible on the basis of Religious uniformity. The State failed to secure uniformity, but discovered that outward uniformity was no longer necessary for political security, and consequently withdrew from the attempt to secure it. The Nonconformists, finding themselves driven by the State in a direction in which they conscientiously objected to go, raised a cry that the State ought not to meddle with Religion. Their contention was absolutely true, so far as it meant that the State ought not to exercise any coercive power over the consciences of its subjects. It is absolutely untrue when it is pressed to the conclusion, that, to secure this result, the State should be stripped of all connexion with the religious life of the Nation. Yet this is the logical extreme which is being pursued. It is even erected into an axiom.

There is no political axiom which is, to me, more repugnant, because it degrades the conception of the State, which I, for one, wish to uphold at all costs. I know the axiom in its mediæval form, when Pope Gregory VII. laid down that Temporal authority had its origin in the instigation of the devil, and drew the conclusion that Spiritual authority was of necessity its master and director. I regard with suspicion any form in which such an opinion is revived. To me the institutions by which my country is governed are precious, and I should sorely grieve to see their claims on my allegiance diminished. I think that every man ought to be taught to regard his citizenship as something to be prized and exercised with a full sense of conscientious responsibility. I can think of nothing so tending to debase the ideal of the State as talk about "freeing the Church from the bondage of the State." This representation of the State as something inherently unholy, something stifling to Spiritual aspirations, something from which the high minded man longs to be delivered, is very dangerous teaching, and indeed is not seriously meant. But Disestablishment, or, as I prefer to call it, the repudiation of a Christian basis of the State, would go far to give real vitality to such opinions. Deplorable as this result would be, I do not see

on what grounds it could be deprecated by those who rashly raise so large an issue to gain such a trivial advantage.

For it is a large issue which is raised when it is purposed that the English State should divest itself of its religious character. Religion will and must hold the chief place in the direction of the aspirations on which national life is founded. It seems to me supremely unwise, for any motives of temporary convenience, to limit permanently the sphere of the State. It seems to me dangerous to insist that the State shall know nothing of principles but shall only be concerned with machinery. I believe that, even amid present difficulties, English politics gain enormously from the existence of a National Church ; and that the change in the discussion of important questions, and in the methods of government, which would follow on its removal, would be very large and far-reaching in its consequences. The tone and temper engendered by a body which feels that it is the guardian and representative of Religion, and feels also its responsibility to the Nation, as a whole, is a very calculable element at the present day, is increasingly necessary as a moderating and soothing influence, and is daily developing into greater consciousness of its national mission. After all, our English institutions depend more upon tone and temper in their use than upon their inherent merits. Disestablishment would work a more abrupt change in the principles on which national cohesion rests than any other alteration in our political system.

The existing state of things in England may be logically anomalous, but corresponds with the English conception of liberty. There is a National Church recognised by the State, and by its side stand a number of Voluntary Organisations. Every man's liberty is respected ; and though each may wish that all were of his own way of thinking, he would be wise, in my opinion, if he recognised that that result can best be pursued by discussion and persuasion rather than by endeavours for external change. I believe that a recognition of this truth is quite possible, and that it would correspond to all that is best in the new aspirations on which the England of the future will be built. At present I am thankfully conscious of the removal of many barriers to a better understanding among different Christian bodies. I think that we, on our side, are free from any feelings of ill will, and are ready to co-operate with all for purposes which we have in common. The chief obstacle to a more rapid progress in friendliness lies in the fact that the question of Disestablishment has entered into an acute political stage. But I remember that many political cries have exhausted themselves in one last shout, and have remained only as feeble echoes. I have every confidence in the good sense and justice of Englishmen, when it is directly applied to any particular question. The only danger at present is that the

importance of this particular question should be obscured, that it should not be definitely submitted for decision on its own merits, but should, in a limited form, appear as one element in a combination which has other and less important ends in view.

The Welsh Bill.

The proposal to disestablish the Church in the four Dioceses of Wales raises a large question in a very unfortunate way. The issue is complicated by the existence of motives which it is difficult to discuss. The desire to revive Nationality as a basis for local government, the desire for social changes which are ill-defined, the wish to lay hands on some funds which may be used for experimental purposes—these are all of them powerful motives which lie behind the specious demand for religious equality. With these desires we are not concerned. They can all be gratified at a less cost than an organic change of the English State. In secular politics this would at once be urged; but there is a danger that the significance of an ecclesiastical change should be overlooked. But it is obvious that the Disestablishment of the Church in Wales must carry with it the whole question of the existence of a National Church. It is useless to say that the Church of England is not menaced, that it stands upon a different footing, and is not affected by the complications which arise from differences of race and language. If the Church in Wales is disestablished, there is no longer any basis of principle left; the existence of a National Church is left as a matter to be settled by local convenience. An agitation in any group of counties might lead to a similar demand in other parts of England; and if the question was skilfully combined with other points of immediate political interest, its importance might be obscured.

We have a right to demand that so large a question should not be approached piece-meal, and should not be discussed in relation to merely local and temporary conditions. There is no ground on which the Church in Wales can be separated from the rest of the English Church. It has had no separate history since the eighth century. Long before Wales was politically united with England it was united ecclesiastically. There has been no breach in the continuity of that connexion. The attempt to represent the Church in Wales as “an alien Church,” imposed upon a reluctant people, has no warrant in the facts of history. Welsh Nonconformity is largely a creation of the early years of this century; and the ground of its present animosity against the Church is not that it is negligent of the needs of the Welsh speaking population, but that it is too active. That there was a period of such negligence cannot be denied. And it is sadly true, in history that the children bear the burden of the carelessness of their fathers.

Institutions are challenged, not when they are at their worst, but when they are putting forth new vigour. The reproach of the past is fixed upon them lest it be forgotten. Haste is made to demand their condemnation, on evidence which is no longer true, but is still specious.

I have made these remarks to you, because I think you would all wish to have clearly before you the grounds on which you stand as regards this question. If the Nation wishes to consider whether or no it shall continue to possess a religious basis for its national life, we Churchmen do not deprecate the discussion. Let the question be clearly stated on its own merits, and let a due measure of time be devoted to setting the matter on its real basis. But we resolutely object to confusing the question of the existence of a National Church with that of the desirability of a larger measure of local self government in a particular district. The unity of the English Church, established or disestablished, is to us a matter of supreme importance. It is useless to tell us that we in England might leave Wales to settle its own affairs. We cannot remain unconcerned when a proposal is made to dismember the National Church. We urge, and we are entitled to urge, that this is a question with which everyone is concerned. I have already referred incidentally to the great moral principle on which popular government must rest: that is, on the appeal to the sense of justice and righteousness which God has implanted in the heart of every man. But the appeal must be made, if the rightness of the answer is to be recognised, on a clear and definite issue. Discussion and delay are of service only as they procure that result. We are justified in this matter in striving our utmost to see that the question is fairly put. To endeavor to procure this is an end in itself, which lies outside party politics. The practical politician would be the first to own his dissatisfaction at the form in which many questions come within the province of his activity. We who feel strongly that a great principle is at stake need have no scruple in urging our conviction, and can appeal to all parties to sympathize with our endeavour to set that principle in the first place.

It is with a sense of sadness that I close my remarks on this subject. Very willingly would you and I pursue our work for Christ in peace, undisturbed by such controversy. There is perhaps no greater trial to our faith than that which comes when we realise that our attempts to do God's Work in what we believe to be God's Way, expose us to the animosity not of the unbelieving and the ungodly, but of those who call themselves by the name of Christ. We are tempted to say "Let us, at any cost, be free from this antagonism: let us abandon anything that stands in the way of godly union and concord." A moment's reflection shows us that such a course is impossible, and that it would be delusory. We cannot abandon our responsibilities as trustees of a great in-

stitution, intimately associated with our national life, unless we are convinced that the change is in itself wise and right. Nor can we hope that any outward change would extinguish animosity, or that the removal of one alleged grievance would bring lasting peace. Many more questions would be raised by disestablishment than would be settled by it; we should still be left with many positions to defend, and grounds for misunderstanding would be indefinitely increased. The search for grounds of agreement would retire into the background before the perpetually increasing need for organised resistance. It is our duty amid the complications of this world's affairs, to accept humbly the task which God has given us for our probation. In upholding the Church, we are not striving for ourselves, nor need we be too anxious to commend ourselves to the fleeting fashions of this world's thought or endeavour. We are upholding the framework of a divinely ordered institution, which in itself can admit of no change, but is endowed with endless adaptability, because it has the promise of the abiding presence of its Lord and Master. We must admit the shortcomings of our forefathers, and must deplore our own. We must learn to labour in such a way that men may see "what manner of spirit we are of." We must strive to remove every pretext for misunderstanding, and approve ourselves as being, in very truth, the Ministers of God. We must be quick to discern all that is good and noble in current objects of endeavour. We must be superior to prejudice, and when "reviled, revile not again." We must carry with us into every field of our activity the fruits of the Spirit "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, and goodness"—for these are the witnesses to the truth of our message.

Any survey of the past, however slight, ought to convince us of human frailty, and of the wrongs which it has done to the Gospel of God's grace. Most grievous is it to see in the past how human arrogance, or selfishness, has found its way into the Church, and has wrought immeasurable ill. Let us give humble thanks that we are free from the temptations which marred so many lofty characters in the past. Let us rejoice that the weapons of our warfare are those of earnest sympathy and kindly persuasion. It would be a worthy object of our endeavour to change the sense which attaches in current literature to the phrase "the ecclesiastical temper." Surely we know no temper, save the temper of our Lord. It is because I fervently believe that the present position of the Church of England, in its relation to the State and to Society, affords a splendid opportunity for bringing Religion to bear upon every relation in life, that I deplore the possibility of any change. The influence of the Church, its responsibility, its sense of a mission—these are inherent in its own nature. Nothing can either add to or take from them. But the sphere and method

of its influence must depend upon the nature of its relationship to the community in which it works. My contention is that the relationship, which now exists in England, is practically in accordance with the genius of English institutions, and is fruitful of great promise for the future.

This truth must be embodied in our outward activity. Our inward life is lived with God in the humble effort to engrave upon our hearts the mark of the Lord Jesus. Our Services and our teaching are directed to build up the members of Christ, committed to our charge, into a consistent body of witnesses to the truth, "as it is in Jesus." The world may go its way, and ring its changes; but the commission to Christ's people remains unaltered,—“Ye are the light of the world: ye are the salt of the earth.” It is for us to make clear that illuminating power, to make vital that cleansing activity. We can only ask God's forgiveness for our past failures, and pray Him to send us forth again with a deepened sense of our responsibility towards all men, as the followers of Him who “took on Himself the form of a servant.” May He of His infinite mercy renew in us that Spirit of Service, and use us for His blessed Will.

II.

BRETHREN OF THE CLERGY AND CHURCHWARDENS OF THE
DEANERIES OF CHRISTIANITY, AKELEY, SPARKENHOE,
AND GOSCOTE.

It is natural for me in taking a survey of my diocese for the first time to consider the changes which have taken place in the clerical staff during the last three years. In so doing it is somewhat significant to note that during that time I have instituted new incumbents in no fewer than thirteen of the twenty-seven parishes contained in the Deanery of Christianity, while the vacancies in the hundred and six parishes comprised in the other deaneries have only amounted to eighteen. This fact is significant of the pressure at which the work in Leicester is carried on, and of the rapidity with which it exhausts physical power. Few of the clergy in a large town are able to do what they feel ought to be done for a long number of years in succession. Few of them are privileged to end their days in the place which they loved so well, and in the discharge of that work to which they had devoted their life's energies. The labour is so perpetual and so exacting that it admits of little relaxation, and leaves no margin for failing power. The sense of personal responsibility does not diminish. No organisation can be so complete, no relationship between pastor and people can be so perfect, that it can long survive the withdrawal of actual presence and personal supervision. A changing population, constantly increasing, presents new problems, which have to be faced as they arise. One who is not always seen is soon forgotten. The man who becomes incapable of facing the daily strain is reluctantly driven to the conclusion that he must make way for another. Constant effort is required, and it is difficult to accumulate a store of reserved force. Such is the overwhelming nature of the work in a large and increasing town.

I have dwelt upon this because it is a point worthy of attention. I know the regret with which many have severed their connection with Leicester ; but they felt that the severance either

was, or soon would be, inevitable. I would say, on their behalf, what they would have wished to say for themselves, because I think that Leicester may be proud of the devotion which it inspires in those who labour for its welfare ; and the sight of that devotion has been full of deep pathos to myself. Canon Broughton struggled against hope that he might be restored to work, and only withdrew to end his days in peace. Nothing save the sternest sense of duty compelled Canon Vaughan to sever his connection with this noble Church, which has been so long identified with his family, and where for years he devoted his great gifts to everything that made for the true advancement of this town, with all its manifold activities. It is not too much to say that his latest volume of sermons is a faithful record of the intellectual and spiritual progress of Leicester. I know how much it cost Mr. Robinson to leave the parish of S. Peter's, which he had built up with unflinching care, and whose ceaseless growth at last overtaxed his strength. I can only rejoice that Dean Ingram was removed, after a long period of splendid service, to a sphere where he can still use his gifts of sympathy, which Leicester trained and quickened, for the service of the whole diocese. I speak of these cases, because I think them worthy of record ; and they are recorded in many hearts and souls. I speak of them, not to the exclusion of others, but as types and examples, which may recall to your minds other work which you know to have been done, and which is still being done among you.

It is natural that to-day I should have this town in my mind, and its problems before me. My brethren from the country will pardon me if I do not attempt a survey which the number of parishes would render tedious, and if I address myself to some considerations which, while they particularly concern great centres of industrial life, should have an universal application.

The Church and Society.

The work which Christ committed to His Church was a spiritual work. Its sphere was in the hearts and consciences of men. But men live together in society ; and the individual life is closely bound up with the lives of others. Men live a common life, and the promptings of natural wisdom have always led mankind to endeavour to arrange that common life according to some principle of natural justice. All human laws and institutions are the means whereby the ideas of justice prevalent in the community are expressed and applied. It is obvious that any spiritual influence which profoundly affects the individual soul must deepen his sense of justice, and make him increasingly sensible of the claims of others. The religion of Jesus Christ from the beginning exercised this influence in a marked way. The Incarnation was felt

to obliterate all arbitrary and conventional differences between man and man. It was made known that "there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all and in all." This was the eternal truth about human society. Distinctions were abolished; all men were equal in the equality of one all-embracing brotherhood.

But though this was ideally true, it was hard to realise; for the mass of men were sunk in the selfishness of paganism, and the Christian spirit could only work slowly on the hard and callous world. But that spirit has always been working, with greater or less power, as the testimony of the Church was strong or weak. For there were times when the outward organisation of the Church was incorporated with the world, and when its spiritual influence consequently was small. There never was a time when the spirit of Christian liberty did not speak through individuals and societies, giving hope and encouragement, and pointing towards the ideal end of aspiration. In Christian lands the individual never lost the consciousness of his worth; and the pressure upon civil society to expand its conception of justice, and enlarge the boundaries of its operation was steady and continuous. This is the one great fruitful principle which can be recognised in the history of Christian times. The true progress that can be traced is a progress towards liberty. This lends dignity to many wasteful struggles. It compensates for many grievous losses. It accounts for many melancholy failures. Ideals, institutions, organisations perished; but the sense of liberty grew stronger through their downfall. Church and State alike suffered many disasters. But Church and State alike were made for man; and mankind grew in dignity even by the misfortunes of its natural protectors and guardians.

It is then a truth that all institutions must do their work in accordance with the admitted needs of man. The Church of Christ, possessing as it does an eternal commission, being witness to the Person of the Lord, must set forth that Person as the one answer to the questionings of man's heart. It is not without God's will that these questionings arise. It is for us to deal with them according to the wisdom and power which God has given us. Let us see what is our position as Christians towards some of the questions which now are uppermost.

Liberty is the inalienable possession of man; liberty to express himself, to speak out his thoughts, to become all that he can become, to find scope for his powers, to develop his spiritual capacities. But there is in actual practice the difficulty of adjusting each man's claim for himself with the equally valid claim of every one of his fellows. This is the problem which society has to solve, and on its solution social well-being depends,

Liberty is frequently regarded as if it were only a right ; but it is also a serious responsibility. The great question for the modern world to determine is, how men are to be fitted to bear the heavy burden of liberty. When my place is allotted to me, when I act under authority, discharge my appointed work and receive my appointed reward, life is comparatively simple. But when my place is left to be determined by my own efforts, when I undertake to be arbiter of my own duties, when I decide how much shall be my labour and what its recompense, I must carefully scan the conditions of life as a whole, and must learn to keep an open mind and a sensitive conscience.

Now, if we regard the results of the manifold variety of suggestions, of schemes, of practical activity, and of definite organisations which exist at the present day, we see that they all spring from the consciousness of a liberation of human faculties, from a keen desire to bring every man's life within the sphere of the best influences which man's wit and man's wisdom have discovered. It is true that there is a bewildering fertility of suggestiveness. But this is no unwholesome sign. It is true that some of the suggestions are crude. But Utopia has existed at all times, and though it be not found, the attempts to find it are fertile of results, as were the voyages to discover Cathay and El Dorado. We need not be afraid of ideal systems. All human efforts are conditioned by the imperfection of human agents. It is easy, in the retirement of the study, to make the small assumption that a change in the outward conditions of human life will at once produce an increase of human capacity. Alas, the first steps in actual practice shows us that change is slow in coming, that human nature is stubborn and unyielding, that it cannot be remodelled from without, but must develop from within. Social progress is conditioned by moral progress. The saying of Montesquieu "A Republic is founded on virtue," is insuperably true ; and the virtue of a community rests upon its religion. Law will never be welcomed, never be revered, unless it is felt that "its seat is the bosom of God, and its voice the harmony of the world." Proposals for amendment may be made, are made in this imperfect world, in the form of attacks on existing arrangements, and are often founded on claims which may be urged in terms merely of class selfishness. It is the function of the community to do its best to eliminate selfishness from the arguments on both sides, to insist on the case being submitted on the ground of justice, and then to embody its decision in an extended application of recognised principles. Only such a decision will become binding on men's consciences and not merely enlist for a time a reluctant submission to compulsion.

The organ of the community for this important purpose is the Church, which must always be the guardian, the educator, and

the exponent of the national conscience. This fact is being increasingly recognised, and the opinion of Christians is more and more required on all claims which are put forward, and all schemes which are devised, for the amelioration of the conditions of human life.

Now if we look at the past we see that in former times the influence of the Church was steadily exercised in the form of amending the inequalities of defective social arrangements. The Church, possessing its own conception of the value of man, strove to supplement the action of society, or redress its deficiencies. It did so by providing what the State was unable to provide—schools, universities, hospitals, almshouses, and the like. In this way it gradually enforced upon the State a higher conception of duty towards the community as a whole. Thus the whole fabric of the Poor Laws grew up round the alms contributed in Church by Christian men for the relief of the sick and the indigent. The State took over this work of the Church, and made binding on all by law the obligation which the Church had enforced on the consciences of her children. But though the State has undertaken some branches of this work, others are still left to private and voluntary beneficence, which the Church must always stimulate and direct. Moreover, new directions for Christian activity are always being discovered, new lines of work are continually being opened out. Efforts for redemption and reclamation, for the removal of temptations and for the promotion of orderly habits, carry on the pursuit of social welfare into regions where the State is entirely unable to follow. The position of the Church as a pioneer remains, and always must remain, unchanged. It is in the very nature of things quite impossible to bring under State regulation the manifold impulses of human nature, or to make State provision for its various needs.

But though this part of the work of the Church still exists, as pressing and as important as ever, we cannot rest content with simply following on these old lines. The process of the liberation of human faculties, which I have already explained, has made society as a whole anxious to enter upon a larger heritage, of which it has had the promise. The question is asked: "Why should not many of these amending agencies of former times be rendered necessary by their permanent incorporation into the social system? Society has needed Christian charity to redress its inequalities in the past; why should not society revise its system so as to take that charity into its sphere? Why should we amend from without and not reorganise from within?" With such a demand, conceived in such a spirit, everyone must cordially sympathise. There can be no nobler task, no more truly Christian task, than to garner the results of Christian experience and incorporate them into the system of our common life. It must, however, be

admitted that the process must be gradual, and that each step in it requires discussion, which is sometimes carried on in terms of struggle and conflict, by weapons which the Church cannot use, and in a language which the Church cannot speak.

Let me explain my meaning more fully. The fabric of human society has come into being slowly. It represents the best attempts of man's wisdom to arrange the details of common life. This wisdom is in each particular age scanty and limited. Sometimes it has been possessed only by a few, who have not always proved superior to the temptation to use their gifts to some degree for their own advantage. It has always been applied to the solution of questions which were pressing. Any social system changes only under pressure, for this obvious reason—so much human energy is required to maintain what exists that, without good cause shown, it is not easily diverted to make re-adjustments. In fact, men are so occupied with life as it is that some powerful impulse is necessary to direct their attention to what life might be. A new impulse has been given in our day by a larger diffusion of knowledge, and the consequently increased power of expression. I said that society was arranged by the best of man's wisdom. The number of those who can form and express opinions has vastly increased. There are numerous demands, and still more numerous suggestions of the means of satisfying them. Great causes are pleaded at the bar of public opinion, and an immediate verdict is required. Questions are raised which go to the very foundation of social life, and seem to threaten sweeping change with perilous rapidity.

It must be remembered that society is the product of man's conscious or unconscious endeavour to provide for the needs of common life. I do not know that change is more inevitable because it is asked for, or that it is more dangerous because it is made consciously. Change and adjustment there have always been; we sometimes speak as though nothing ever happens save what is formally discussed and voted upon. The most important changes which affect society are those which are unperceived and unrecognised till they have been accomplished. Man can do little more by his arrangements than take note of an accomplished fact. Changes in the structure of society cannot be made rapidly; they are limited by the average capacity to discharge the increased responsibility which they involve. They are tested at every step by their immediate results, and slight mistakes rapidly generate counteracting influences. The balance of forces in human society is almost as delicate as the equilibrium established in the realm of nature. It may be analysed and discussed, but it cannot be summarily altered from outside. Proposals for change may erect themselves into the dignity of systems; they are but expressions of tendencies, which will be powerful only so

far as they are willingly recognised and accepted by the conscience of the community. There is, I think, no real ground for fear of rash or precipitate change in the fabric of society.

I spoke of the pressure which was necessary to induce society to discuss any question concerning its actual order. This pressure can only come from the generation of new forces, or from the collection and organisation of existing forces into definite activity. The perception of such a pressure is rarely welcomed at once ; for it calls to fresh exertion, and bids men look beyond the maxims which have hitherto been enough to direct them. It is a summons to think, and thinking is always painful. We are always erecting barriers, and enclosing little spots, where we may dwell in intellectual peace, masters of a little world which we have thought out for ourselves. It may not be. The great world surges outside, destroys our palings, breaks in upon our quiet, and asserts that its claims alone are real. It is an accusation sometimes made against Christians that they are too much immersed in the little sphere within which they are striving to lead a protected life, that they are unduly heedless of the cries which are raised around them, that they are indisposed towards new movements, and are not quickly sympathetic with new aspirations.

Now I am willing to make the greatest allowance for the truth contained in this assertion, which I think needs careful examination. First of all, I cannot deny that it is possible to be selfish in religion ; that a man who has found peace for his own soul wonders that everyone else does not follow his exact example, sets a supreme value on his own experience, and emphasises that as the solution for everyone's troubles. This is a possibility which we have always to keep before us. The richer we know the fruits of our own intellectual or spiritual efforts to have been for ourselves, the more we are disposed to offer them, and them only, as our contribution to the needs of others. Yet we must remember that our own experience ought to result in the possession of principles which are of infinite power of application ; and we ought to be able to apply the love of God, which we feel in our hearts, to any problem which is put before us. A Christian is above all things bound to be studiously humble. We can always learn from the world's criticism—it may be severe, but it is to some extent just. We should have some sort of answer to give to any question which is raised ; we can only regret our own incompetence when we are silent. But, in the next place, it must be admitted that several questions are not always raised in the first instance in a form on which conscience can decide. They appear in a controversial shape, and the statements, it may be on both sides, are crude and exaggerated. It is sometimes difficult to find the exact principle

of justice, to disentangle the ultimate and the proximate aim. Moreover, it is to be remembered that the Church is, in a special sense, the guardian of all the good that already exists in society. She knows with what difficulty our existing possessions have been acquired, because she knows the extent of the dominion of sin. She cannot put aside the truth about human nature and its inherent frailty. She knows how much care is necessary to maintain even the standard of moral and spiritual effort which now prevails. She wishes to arrange new aspirations according to possible principles of regular and orderly growth. She feels bound to invite new ideas to put forward their best side, to attach themselves to great and admitted truths, to submit to the restraints which are necessary for youthful petulance in individuals and systems alike.

Now, I believe that it is in steadfastly exercising this purifying and sifting influence that the great work of the Church of Christ for human society depends. Let all men think, and observe, and speak. Let them consider it a duty to put forward for the common good the best they know, the highest they think. But let them do so with a sense of responsibility, and let them rest their claims on demonstrable justice. This is the basis of our political system; the danger attaching to this system is that the element of justice should be slurred over or assumed, and that the decision should be made by a clash of contending interests. The consciousness of the Christian Church stands between the promulgation of schemes and their political accomplishment. It calls upon "interests" on both sides to discard selfishness. It endeavours to form a tribunal where the public conscience shall sit as judge. The beneficence of this endeavour is obvious. No legal decision is binding conclusively which does not carry with it the approval of the common conscience. No system can prevail which assumes that man is other than he is. No body of men can be compelled to do what they do not think to be right and acknowledge as such.

Social Problems.

The social problems of the present day are in their nature economic. They are concerned with the more equal distribution of material advantages. On the general principle, that it is desirable to distribute them as largely as possible, there is no disagreement among right-minded men. The question is how far it is possible to distribute them, and how experiments can best be made to determine this point. It is obvious that wealth must be produced before it can be distributed; and experiments in the mode of its distribution must not be such as to interfere disastrously with its production. Hence experiments have to be made cautiously, in detail, and with reference to particular facts.

These facts, moreover, are in their nature hard to determine ; they are complicated ; they cannot be isolated, but are interwoven with a huge and somewhat artificial system. None but those who have given attention to the particular question which is raised can justly venture to express a decided opinion. The organisation of labour, or of capital, is for the purpose of training expert opinion on one side, and of acting upon that opinion. It sometimes happens that the conflict of opinion has to be decided by a disastrous appeal to the power of endurance on both sides. At such times we are all oppressed by the sense of the limitations of human forethought ; our conscience is shocked by the occurrence of strife. There is a temptation to express a rash judgment on the points at issue. But a Christian is not necessarily an economist ; if he were, he would probably know that he was entirely incapable of judging in this particular case ; that judgment required a mass of minute knowledge which he did not possess and could not hastily acquire.

Has he, therefore, no part to play ? I venture to think that there is much which he can do. He may not be able to help intellectually in settling the dispute ; but he can greatly influence the temper in which it is conducted. He can sympathise with those who are concerned ; and I do not think that the sorrow and suffering is entirely on one side. The dislocation of human relationships is a severe trial. The sense of helplessness before forces which seem as stern and unapproachable as are the forces of inanimate nature, is hard to bear. The feeling of individual sacrifice to maintain a principle with a resolute, orderly, unimpassioned mind, is an enormous demand on human nature. The voice which says "Sirs, ye are brethren," is a grateful reminder of a necessary truth, which sometimes threatens to escape. The pressure of the hand which recognises the gravity of the situation carries sustainment. The sympathetic criticism which pleads : "You struggle for a principle ; keep that principle unsullied by passion ; I cannot say if you are intellectually right in your end, but I can judge if you are morally right in your means ;" this is the support which keeps men true to their best selves, and makes for peace. It is the function of the Church to turn men's hearts towards one another ; it is through the maintenance of an attitude of mutual good feeling that an agreement can most surely be reached. What was impossible on the ground of reason, operating only on the facts before it, becomes possible under the stimulus of quickened sympathy. New hopefulness is engendered ; new conditions are discovered ; new experiments are worth trying because the germs of new capacities, hitherto latent come into view. Surely this is the inner meaning which we are justified in extracting from the melancholy process of a strike. "We wish for a higher standard of life," is the claim of

the worker. "It is impossible, as things are, to alter the condition of labour," is the answer of the employer. The conflict compels both sides to look deeper into things, to discover new possibilities, to devise new adjustments, to develop a resourcefulness, an inventiveness, unknown before. The conclusion finally arrived at is that which is dictated by actual facts; but in the process it may be that the facts have been modified by new additions, or have assumed a new aspect by change of attitude towards them.

Surely it is the duty of Christian men to seek out and to manifest the permanent significance of passing events, to discover their fruitful principles and to exhibit them in their inward and abiding meaning. For this purpose the Christian must avoid partisanship, and must seek for that quiet wisdom which comes from the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit of God. In all ages there is a desire for the "*vir pietate gravis*," whose utterance may compose discord. It is true that in the heat of discussion there are loud cries for active help instead of kindly sympathy. Men need an ally, not a dispassionate adviser. They exclaim "What is the Church doing?" They demand that the judgment of conscience should be entirely on their side. But no fair judgment can be given without a careful sifting of facts; and it is facts which are in dispute. When the cry is raised that the Church should pronounce an opinion, the term *Church* is generally used to mean the clergy who, I need not remind you, are not the Church, but merely its officers. Now, the clergy are as a rule, from the mere nature of their vocations, the class in the community which is least versed in business affairs. They are little suited, as a body, to decide economic questions. They have the most ardent desire to promote the welfare of their people; but this desire does not enable them always to judge decisively that any particular scheme for that purpose is immediately practicable. I believe that this obvious truth is generally understood. I believe that what men of all kinds of opinion would all join in advising, is benevolent neutrality in trade disputes, constant helpfulness in alleviating inevitable distress, outspoken criticism of all unfairness, and unswerving maintenance of the great principle of justice.

The Christian Church is the necessary link which binds men together. It is the great guarantee for peaceful progress. I would urge my brethren to learn all that they can of the actual facts of the occupations of those amongst whom they labour; to discover their aims, and to apply to all impartially the tests of Christian morality. The great need of our day is that all human relationships should be first moralised and then spiritualised. For this great end we need not only good intentions, but knowledge and wisdom. I hail with great satisfaction a project for

forming a Church Workers' Union, in this great town of Leicester. I am convinced that what we need is greater knowledge, and more thoughtfulness, to make zeal more effective. As society becomes more complex every form of activity has to be more specialised, and has to be founded upon a careful study of details. Legislation can only follow slowly upon the development of the national conscience. Christian zeal on the other hand is always in the van, and is striving to occupy new regions. Before society can turn its attention to subjects, religious minds are slowly bringing them into prominence. When questions have once entered within the sphere of politics, religion may leave them to the conscience which she has educated. The Christian claims no reward, not even that of recognition of his labours. The practical intelligence of the world may shape them and may glory in its cleverness. It may emphasise the difference between the political deftness of humanitarian effort, and the long, obscure, and bungling process of Christian charity. We neither murmur nor repine. We only marvel to see in the world's progress new opportunities for the Church, new calls to apply in new places the healing power of the Redemption wrought for all men by the Lord. The world is growing sadly conscious that it cannot cure the wounds which it inflicts. Its eyes are more and more fixed upon the Church, whose attitude and actions are closely scanned.

My brothers, can you walk in the streets of this great town and not feel the burden of the work which is entrusted to you? Few, far too few, are the labourers: scanty are the means at their command. I would that there were more clergy, and that they were better supplied with equipment. I would that they were freer from anxiety about material organisation. I would that the laity relieved them more than at present. I know what good service is rendered to good works by many busy men. I know how much self-sacrifice is shown. But is there not room for more? Great is the labour, but it is blessed. It is God's work, and He who gives us eyes to see it will give us power to perform it. We can only commit ourselves entirely to Him, and so take courage.

III.

BRETHREN OF THE CLERGY AND CHURCHWARDENS OF THE
DEANERIES OF GUTHLAXTON, GARTREE, AND FRAMLAND.

I am glad to think that fewer changes have occurred in this part of my diocese than in any other during the last three years. Many of you will think of friends who have been removed, but I will not pause to commemorate them now. I will only express my satisfaction at the signs of vigorous life which have been displayed in many quarters. The restoration of the Churches of Great Bowden, Hallaton, and Freeby, has been successfully accomplished. I am glad to know that the Church of Newtown Linford will soon be put into good order. There are, moreover, two works of great importance which have been achieved in circumstances peculiarly gratifying. The restoration of Foxton Church has been carried out under great difficulties, with a display of energy, and a completeness of result, which far surpassed anything that I could have hoped. The very interesting Church of Long Clawson was in such a precarious condition, that at one time it was proposed to remove it altogether and build another in its stead. I am glad to say this course was abandoned, and the old Church has been restored with scrupulous care, to the great satisfaction of the parishioners.

There is yet another matter to which I could refer with pleasure,—the building of a large and commodious School for Market Harborough by voluntary contributions. This was provided with such heartiness and good will that I cite it as an example of what can be done by clear convictions. I will take that particular instance as affording me a reason for explaining what these convictions were and on what they were founded.

The Church and Education.

The question of Education is one in which the Church must always have an abiding interest, not so much in particular details as in its essential principles. There are many questions which are questions of administrative detail; but education is

founded on principles, of which the Church is in a sense the guardian. The Church, as soon as it was organised, made education one of its chief aims; and every branch of the existing system of our national education grew up under the shadow of the Church, and under her direction. The progress of society has gone along the line of differentiation of functions. The work of the Church has been to train the national conscience to an increasingly high conception of its duties. When the nation has been educated by the Church up to a sufficient point, it shows its consciousness of the advance which it has made by taking over from the Church the work which it has hitherto done and transferring it to the State. This is a natural process, and one which we as Churchmen gladly welcome. We are always ready that any branch of our work for society should be taken over by the great organ of the State, or by voluntary societies. Thus the care of the poor, as a systematic obligation, passed three centuries ago to the State; and the care of the sick in Hospitals has been taken over by voluntary bodies.

But these are matters of administrative detail, and raise no difference of opinion about the methods to be followed or the principles on which they rest. It is to be regretted that about education there exists a difference of opinion, which was recognised from the first. The first step in making education national was that the Church, together with all other religious bodies, was regarded as an agent of the State, and received subvention from the State for educational purposes. The Act of 1870 proposed that all existing schools should continue as they were, and that the State should supplement them by providing means for the compulsory supply of schools in districts where population was rapidly increasing.

The Voluntary system and the State system were to exist side by side, and were to influence one another beneficially. This to a large extent has been the case.

The rapid development of general interest in education, following upon the introduction of a universal system, is a matter for thankfulness and pride. We rejoice that education has been made compulsory and free of charge. We rejoice that England has recognised the rudiments of education as necessary for every member of the community, and has placed it at the disposal of all. We regard such a result as a worthy token of enlightened conscientiousness, and a quickened sense of universal obligation. In the next place, this general increase of interest in education has produced greater attention to educational methods, and to the conditions in which education can best be conducted. In this also we rejoice, and our desire for educational efficiency is keen. It is true that changes come quickly, that experiments are costly,

But it cannot be too clearly stated that the managers of Voluntary Schools are just as much interested in all that can promote educational progress as are the members of a School Board. It is, however, obvious that members of a body which has behind it the unlimited resources of the public purse are not likely to be so critical of new experiments as are those who have to render an account to voluntary subscribers. Men pay their rates in a total sum and shrug their shoulders ; but they wish to know the reasons of every part of a scheme for which they are required to give a voluntary contribution. I may remark in passing, that this fact alone seems to me to constitute one great reason for the maintenance of voluntary schools. They not only diffuse, but create, an interest in the progress of education, to a degree which no purely official system could achieve. The members of a Board bow before the decision of a central authority ; the managers of a voluntary school sometimes criticise, not it may be the abstract wisdom of its decree, but its applicability to the conditions of their particular school.

It is quite natural and right that the large results gained by observation and comparison all over the country should be garnered by the central authority of the State, and that their lessons should be applied. So far as this concerns educational standards and methods no difficulty arises. But the question of the conditions under which education can best be carried on not unnaturally raises differences of opinion. The new schools have been built on better plans than those which are of older date. School buildings are subjected to much wear and tear. The majority of voluntary schools were built for a smaller number than that which they now accommodate ; they have been extended to meet increasing needs, till in some cases the capacities of their site seem to be exhausted. It is always a difficult question to decide when a building ought to be renewed ; it is natural that official decisions are not always accepted without a murmur. But I do not think it fair to represent these murmurs, which often spring from local sentiment, as an opposition to educational progress on the part of the managers of Voluntary Schools. A parallel instance occurs to my mind in a matter which is within the experience of my brethren of the clergy. The Diocesan Surveyor for dilapidations is elected by the votes of the clergy themselves ; but his decisions are not on that account accepted without a murmur. The opinion of an outgoing tenant about his house by no means coincides with that of the incomer. In many cases both sides feel just a little aggrieved, and express their grievance. But I do not conclude from that that the clergy are indifferent to the repair of ecclesiastical buildings.

In point of fact, many of the requirements made by the Educational Department are sanitary requirements ; and no subject

admits of greater difference of opinion or invites more costly experiments. Yet on the other hand, nothing is more important for the well being of the race ; and I think that the educational influence of school life passed under wholesome and carefully selected conditions is of very great importance. If we look forward, as we do, to education as a means of bringing home to every family the best results of the common wisdom, then we must consider that everything which is under the direction of the community should be above reproach. It is most important that school buildings, their plant, and their arrangements should be adapted to teach neatness, carefulness, and modesty. We certainly wish that our Voluntary Schools should be as good as possible, and that every locality should have the right to be proud of its school buildings.

We have arrived at a period when, owing to a number of causes—the introduction of free education, the effect of time on our buildings, the heightening of the standard of educational requirements—there is a decided pressure felt on the resources of Voluntary Schools. It is unfortunate, though inevitable, that these causes should have coincided, so that their joint pressure is felt at the same time. This has given rise to an uneasy feeling about the future, which I believe to be exaggerated. It is supposed that this pressure will be continuous, whereas I hold that it has nearly reached its highest point. Compulsory and free education has exercised its full influence on the number of children to be provided for. The requirements of building accommodation must bear a relation to the actual facts of life ; and I think that these requirements will not mount much higher. I do not regard them as excessive at present ; and I entirely fail to see in the desire expressed by the Education Department to make these requirements universal, any trace of a policy to raise an undue standard of efficiency. Again, I say it is unfortunate that so much has to be done at once ; but if we set to work and do it, I think that we shall soon settle down for a period of peaceful work, during which I hope that something of the nature of a sinking fund will be started in connection with every school.

At all events, I am quite sure that Voluntary Schools must be above all suspicion of standing in the way of educational efficiency.

I have spoken about this matter as far as regards the material aspect. But there is no doubt that this continued pressure for pecuniary support has fallen with such unequal incidence, especially in places where a School Board rate is levied, that there is some objection to the continued maintenance of two systems, one voluntary and the other rate-supported. The question is raised, Is it worth while ?

The reason why the Church has maintained her schools is simply because she did not think herself justified in abandoning her own view of education and of her duty towards it. Her view was not, and could not be, quite identical with that of the State. The State from its nature can go no farther than prescribe such requirements as all are agreed upon as desirable for its citizens. Now Englishmen are agreed that a knowledge of the Christian religion is the chief of these requirements ; but unfortunately they are not agreed as to the exact form in which Christianity shall be taught. This difficulty was a real difficulty which no one wished to extenuate. The Church continued her own schools as a security for the religious teaching of her own children. Was she right in so doing ? Has anything in the experience of the last twenty years led us to think that we were needlessly scrupulous and careful ?

Now in religion, education is more strongly marked off from instruction than it is in secular subjects. Provided that a child is taught to read and write, the mode by which the result is attained is of secondary importance. I do not say that the mode is of *no* importance ; it may, of course, have great educational value, and may carry with it lessons which go beyond its immediate scope. But the *instruction* is of value in itself, however it is obtained, and is a permanent possession which raises one who has it to a higher level of capacity. The same cannot be said of the contents of religious teaching. In religion instruction cannot well be separated from education. Let me take an extreme case to illustrate my meaning. I can conceive of religious topics being taught in such a way as to produce excellent results in an examination, and yet to inspire repugnance in the mind of the learner. This is an extreme and improbable case ; but it illustrates the point which I wish to enforce. Religious teaching is not, and cannot be, confined to some part of the instruction given in a school. We all admit that the most important part of education is the formation of character. Now character is only influenced by character ; and the mode in which influence is exerted is by the exhibition of principles operative in their application to particular needs. The whole question of discipline depends on the attitude of the teacher towards the children as human beings. There is in every lesson, no matter what the subject may be, a perpetual appeal, unconscious I admit, to some motive in the child's mind. The appeal, I say, is unconscious, but its effect is cumulative ; and the most important effect of any educational system is the general attitude towards life which it has inculcated.

It may be said that this is over subtle ; that it is an application of principles, which are true in the more advanced forms of education, to the simpler forms where they cannot be sufficiently developed to be powerful. The maxim "*De minimis non curat lex*"

is a statement of human limitations : if we said " *De minimis non curat Deus* " we should be speaking blasphemy. Everything that concerns the development of a child's mind and character is of supreme importance ; and that character is undoubtedly the result of all the influences to which it has been subjected. The outward activities of life are constantly disguising the real meaning of actions. There is a difference, which will not only be revealed hereafter, but which works itself out in its effects here and now, between the man whose life is built on a belief in the Lord Jesus, and the man whose life is built on any other basis. The outward aspect of the activity of the two men may be equally satisfactory ; but their tendencies diverge, and they generate different forces. Society, let us remember, is the crude expression of the forces which are generated by its individual members. Every man, in spite of outward agreement or disagreement, looks towards Christ, or he does not. We may over-estimate, or we may under-estimate, particular methods of so doing ; but the efforts of society depend upon the goal of those who make them.

This, then, is the reason why we wish to preserve education on Christian principles, and see in it something more than a matter to be decided by considerations of present convenience. We do not overlook all that is said in favour of escaping from present difficulties by accepting a universal system of secular education from the State, to be supplemented by a religious education from various Christian bodies. But we deprecate the separation between religion and life which would thus be emphasised alike in the eyes of teacher and taught. The method of dichotomy has always an appearance of simple justice ; but the proposal of Solomon to apply it to a living organism revealed the true parent. Doubtless her preference for unity partook of the nature of obstruction. The Church must run the same risk of misrepresentation in her desire to be the true mother of her children.

So then, I am convinced that we are doing a real service to the community by holding fast to our Church schools. The pressure is severe ; the difficulties are many ; the labour is hard ; the future is uncertain. But the object is worthy ; and we act in a missionary spirit. We are not striving in the interests of the Church as one out of many religious organisations ; but we are struggling for Christianity and we are struggling for education. We do not wish, if we can help it, to see the abiding interests of either of these great causes sacrificed to temporary difficulties. I call them temporary because no one can say that the existing situation corresponds to the expectations or wishes of the community. It has come about by a series of accidents ; and the only danger is that the trouble of disentangling complications should lead to a desire to solve them in the simplest and shortest, rather than in the wisest, way. At present the teaching of religion in Board

Schools is a matter of frequent dispute. It is identified with political questions, which have no real connection with it. It is settled by reference to principles which are not related to religion. Principles, in fact, have been turned upside down; and at present many who once maintained general principles in a too abstract way, do not know how to escape from the unwelcome results which they have brought. The desire to prevent any one Christian body from being unduly favoured has practically led to the favouring of the smallest and least Christian body; and many earnest Christian men still express themselves satisfied with this result, simply because it is the logical conclusion of the principles which they unwisely advocated. The pursuit of undenominationalism has led to the omission of every truth about which there was a difference of opinion, till nothing is left but Unitarianism. Christian men cannot long face this fact with any semblance of satisfaction. It is difficult to get rid of principles which have been proved deceptive. No man likes to admit that he has made a mistake. We stand at a point where obstinacy still conquers reason. But in a little while it is to be hoped that reason will prevail; and that some more fruitful principle will gradually be substituted for its barren predecessor.

For really the matter stands thus. The cry was raised, and was at first accepted: "No religious teaching ought to be provided at the public expense which any section of the community objects to." This principle has been tried, and has not worked satisfactorily. It is difficult to discover that to which no one objects; and when it is gradually discovered it does not correspond to the expectations which were formed about it. This would not be a convincing argument against the present system if no other principle could be substituted. But there is another principle which is more in accordance with our English conception of liberty. It is this: "All religious teaching ought to be provided at the public expense which any section of the community desires." We have tried the experiment of allowing every parent to say what he does not wish his children to be taught: might we not try a system which allows every parent to say what he does wish his children to be taught? Is it not better for the community to give effect to the positive desires of its citizens rather than to gratify their negative objections? Surely true liberty consists in everyone having his own way so far as is compatible with the well-being of society as a whole. Where men are not agreed society cannot enforce a general system; if it tries to create a general system by attempting to discover a residuum, after all disagreements have been omitted, it is really doing a wrong to all positive convictions, and is working in the interests of those whose convictions are fewest. While professing to be neutral it is really throwing the weight of its influence into the scale which weighs

the least. This fact is being gradually appreciated. When it is more clearly seen its significance will be recognised. By maintaining our Voluntary Schools, at a considerable cost of repeated acts of self-sacrifice, we are affording public opinion time to turn round. We are not engaged in a hopeless struggle against a system which satisfies everybody except ourselves. On the other hand, we are maintaining a principle which makes for a larger conception of individual liberty than that which at present prevails.

We are, therefore, maintaining Voluntary Schools not primarily in the interests of the Church, but of the Christian religion. We wish to make common cause with all Christians. The issue is too serious to be confounded with any other; and our hopes for the future depend on our power of making clear the absolute integrity of our intentions. Let us make it clear that we ask nothing for ourselves which we do not ask for every other religious body. We desire to see religious instruction given in a religious spirit, and given intelligently. We value a knowledge of the Bible, not only for its religious importance, but for its educational importance. I think that this is apt to be underrated; but to me it seems that the only instruction given in elementary schools which tends to mental cultivation is that which centres round the teaching of the Bible. The Bible contains history, poetry, morality, as well as religion. It stimulates fancy and develops thought, besides the spiritual influence which it exercises. Any knowledge of Scripture is some foundation on which the soul may one day be built up. It would be grievous indeed if the jealousies of rival sects should imperil the vast advantage to be obtained from every child knowing the contents of Holy Writ.

I would, therefore, urge upon you to maintain all existing provisions for religious teaching, and try to make them as ample as can be. I would urge the recognition of all teachers as entrusted with a religious mission, and entitled to sympathy and esteem. The schoolmaster, whether he be the master of a Voluntary School or of Board School, should be regarded by the clergyman as his natural friend and helper. The school in like manner should be the object of interest to all who are striving for the welfare of the parish. We cannot think too much of it, nor of the young ones who will soon grow old and form the England of the future.

These are general considerations, and perhaps do not help directly to that "educational policy" which is so often demanded. I do not think that opinion at present is ripe for a universal agreement. But by maintaining our schools we maintain the cause of religious education, which I believe the English people have sincerely at heart. We maintain them in the hope of a time when all schools may be federated, and all children may receive

the religious teaching which their parents wish. As Churchmen, we want nothing more than a guarantee that the children of Church people may be taught what their parents wish them to be taught. The same liberty which we ask for ourselves we ask for all others. If this were to be achieved, we should have a system of national education which corresponded to the facts of national life ; and all financial difficulties would be at an end. In fact, the Church is not striving against a national system of education, but is striving to discover one which will be national in reality as well as name, in contents as well as in externals.

I have spoken hitherto of the religious side of elementary education. It is deplorable that "the education question" should at present mean this, and this only. This aspect is of primary, I may say of vital, importance ; and when once raised must remain in the first place till it is settled. But there are many other questions connected with education in which the clergy should be deeply interested. They ought from their position and their opportunities to be the independent observers and critics of the whole system of elementary education, which is still in a rudimentary condition. No one can profess unmixed satisfaction with its results in awakening intelligence and forming character. Teachers, inspectors, and those who are called educationists, all have their own proposals for amendment. But the clergy ought to lead in creating a public interest in the contents of education. It is not enough to build school buildings in accordance with the last requirements of sanitary science, nor to determine how much religion shall be taught in them. There remains the abiding question, by what means, and in what subjects the intelligence of the scholars can best be developed. I incline to think that our present system errs on the side of uniformity. It does not follow that all over England, in towns and country, the subjects should be substantially the same. There is need for greater latitude of experiment. But any relaxation of central control in this respect is only possible if local interest be keen, and if there be an intelligent body to whom some measure of responsibility may be delegated. I could imagine a committee of the Town Council, or the District Council, which stood between the schools and the Department. But the existence of such a body would probably presuppose more general interest in the nature and contents of education than already exists. To quicken such interest is a worthy object, which ought not, even among the pressure of other objects, to be forgotten. Moreover it is becoming increasingly plain that an education, which necessarily ceases at an early age, needs to be supplemented. In the country no one ought to be so zealous as the clergyman in organising and directing Continuation Classes. It ought to be a natural and obvious thing for every child who leaves school to be

drafted at once into such a class, and to continue a course of regular study. The utility of such a proceeding should be enforced from time to time on those who are about to leave school; and it ought to be possible to form a fairly accurate idea of the sort of subject which would possess most interest for them. A little care in combining a certain amount of recreation with instruction would undoubtedly make the arrangement easier. Every clergyman has some sort of organisation of his own for the good of the young when they leave school. He would find this organisation much more potent for good if it did not stand alone, but comprised every agency which could help to form character. Industry and application are habits which affect the whole of life. Boys and girls would be more likely to be regular at Sunday School, at Confirmation Classes, at Communicants Classes, if they also attended Continuation Classes. The intellectual life is closely connected with the spiritual life. Nothing would be more likely to promote the welfare of the young than that they should leave school with a workable scheme for disposing of their leisure, with intelligible objects set before them for their own welfare. Every child carries away from school at least a sense of discipline. With a little personal care this might be maintained against the temptations of a precocious freedom. It is the few weeks after leaving school which constitute the most severe crisis of a young life. Care at such a time is most fruitful. It is easier to keep the young in hand, than to recover a hold which has been lost. But this can only be done by providing in some degree for all the natural needs of developing character.

In the same way the clergy ought to be assiduous helpers in the experiments which are now being made in the direction of Technical Education. I think it most fortunate that one branch of education has accidentally been left open for local experiments, and I hope that this experimental stage will not be prematurely checked. But this will undoubtedly depend upon the interest which is taken in it. Experiment is of little value unless it is accompanied by careful observation, and the clergy ought to form a class of interested and capable observers. Organisers and teachers alike have much to learn, and would be grateful for unobtrusive hints founded on an appreciation of the difficulties and on a desire to help.

I need not pursue this subject further. It is our boast in England that education in the past has been almost entirely the work of men animated by religious motives. It must always be the work which comes next in importance to directly spiritual work. I have given reasons why I think that the continued interest of the Church in the matter is needful for some time to come. The school must still hold its place as part of the machinery of the parish. I can only say that it is more valuable

than many objects on which money is freely spent, organs, decorations of the Church, painted windows, and the like.

The great argument to be adduced for the maintenance of Church Schools is the religious life which they develope. This largely depends upon the zeal of the clergymen and his hearty co-operation with the teachers. Interest in children is surely easy to every one; the bond of sympathy established in childhood ought to grow steadily stronger as life goes on. All efforts for the good of man must begin at the beginning. Take care of Christ's little ones; they will teach you more than you can teach them. The surest sign of social progress is increasing interest in the generation that is to come. "When our sons are like plants grown up in their youth, and our daughters like corner stones, polished after the likeness of a temple"—this is the first step to that sound national prosperity which leads to the glorious recognition, "Blessed are the people that is in such a case: Yea, happy are the people whose God is the Lord."

IV.

BRETHREN OF THE CLERGY AND CHURCHWARDENS OF THE
DEANERIES OF NORTHAMPTON, DAVENTRY, HADDON,
PRESTON, ROTHWELL, AND WEEDON.

I must begin by expressing my satisfaction that I have no melancholy losses to chronicle in the clerical staff of Northampton. Despite the increasing pressure of work, the work has been done cheerfully and well. Our losses have been in the country district. We mourn the removal of Mr. Rigby and Mr. Longhirst, both of them faithful workers in God's service; and all who knew Mr. Gilbertson must have felt the value of his example as a man of wide learning and ready sympathy, who dwelt among his people and made his life one with theirs: you will join with me in praying that God's blessing may rest on his declining years. There is much care needed to make provision for the needs of the increasing population of Northampton; but we have been greatly cheered in our efforts by the splendid gift of the Church of S. Matthew's, which has begun its career of usefulness with a completeness of everything necessary to add dignity to the service of God's House. Such an example will be powerful in raising the standard of munificence and encouraging efforts on an humbler scale. I need not remind you that these efforts cannot be relaxed. We have seen the completion of the Church of S. Edmund's; but already the need is felt for another church to relieve that parish and the adjacent parish of S. Michael's. I trust that timely provision will be made for that purpose.

In the county the restoration of the Churches of Upton and Everdon is a matter of much satisfaction; while the Churches of Maidwell and Draughton have been put into perfect order by the munificence of one to whom the diocese owes a debt of lasting gratitude.

Biblical Criticism.

I propose to speak to you to-day about the main aspect of some intellectual questions which are agitating men's minds as regards the Bible. It is a large subject, and I cannot hope to do more than deal with its immediate and practical application to ourselves and our teaching.

The Church of Christ stands in manifold relations to the world, so manifold that we are constantly wishing to escape from some of them, to reserve something as entirely our own, entirely free from the changes and chances of this mortal life. God is always declaring to us that this may not be ; and we learn His lessons with pain and with a rebellious sense of disappointment. Man is always wishing for something absolutely fixed. He is constantly erecting barriers beyond which change may not pass : he is constantly seeing those barriers swept away. It was the work of the Middle Ages, amid the stress of war and the pressure of political insecurity, to build up an inalterable system in the organisation of the Christian Church. Oblivious of actual fact, the Western Church claimed to be a universal and necessary system, so constructed that its unity was beyond challenge. The revolt of the sixteenth century against the arbitrary limitations which this system imposed upon the spiritual life shattered for ever its claim to universal allegiance. The Bible was then by many of those who departed from the system of the Church clothed with the same claims to infallibility which they denied to any organisation. The result has been that the Bible, in its turn, has been subjected to the same process of investigation as that which was undergone by the system of the Church. This process has been continuous ; but its results have been more rapid in recent years, and have been communicated in a more out-spoken manner.

Now the Church of England stands in a unique position as regards the whole of this phase of religious development. It did not, like other bodies, cast aside the ancient system of the Church. It was not tempted into the paths of revolution, but followed the safer course of reformation. It did not break the continuity of the historic Church, but with sound learning and spiritual insight proceeded gradually to disentangle what was primitive and Catholic from later accretions, which might be useful or otherwise in themselves, but were to be judged in the first instance with reference, not to their temporary usefulness, but to the standard of Scripture as interpreted by primitive practice. The Church of England, in fact, strove to distinguish between the authority which God for His purposes had conferred on His Church, and that authority which man for his purposes had claimed in God's name. This process was the result of criticism, of careful investigation,

accurate inquiry, and impartial weighing of evidence. It did not please enthusiasts on either side ; but it was a humble and sincere attempt to learn the lesson which God had taught His Church, and to submit human inventions, however venerable, to the test which God prescribed.

Hence it is that the Church of England stands in a remarkably free attitude towards the progress of human learning. It has nothing to conceal, and shrinks from no enquiry. No religious organisation attaches a higher importance to Holy Scripture, or venerates more highly its authority ; but it has never committed itself to any theory concerning the mode in which Scripture was written, or the weight to be attached to it for any other purpose than that of ascertaining all that is necessary to salvation. That the Scriptures contain God's revelation to man there must be no doubt ; but the Church of England has never erected any artificial barrier against enquiry into the mode in which that revelation was made, into the method and degree in which God's Spirit made use of human instruments, into the way in which national records were penetrated with the sense of a Divine purpose. It is true that assumptions have been made on these points, and also on others. Men have always asked questions, and have given themselves answers to the best of their capacity. Such answers are of the nature of hypotheses, founded on the best knowledge available, but capable of extension or alteration as knowledge advances. Thus in former times men inferred the answer to questions concerning the origin of the outward world and the beginnings of life from the words of Scripture. When these questions were investigated in reference to observed facts, the results of enquiry did not correspond with the prevailing hypothesis. The enquirers did not always content themselves with putting aside these hypotheses, but unwarrantably attacked the spiritual truths from which these hypotheses had been wrongly inferred. While, on the other side, those who maintained the spiritual truths showed undue reluctance to abandon hypotheses which rested on speculative inference and not on the evidence of observation and experiment.

In some sense, this is the case with Biblical Criticism. The ordinary mind has accepted certain views about the authorship and method of inspiration of the Bible, which were current hypotheses, till the question was subjected to careful investigation. I am far from saying that these hypotheses are untenable ; but everyone ought to be quite sure about the difference between what is actually said in Scripture on those points, and what is merely the view which he himself has been led to adopt. It is obvious that the position of Scripture is not affected by anything which only investigates the current opinion about it, and carefully weighs the statements which it contains.

Still, it is natural that many pious Christian minds should be disquieted by the abundance of recent speculation on the authorship and mode of composition of many of the books contained in the Bible. It must seem to them that such treatment introduces uncertainty into God's Word as a whole. It is indeed sad, but inevitable, that every intellectual process should be at first tentative. In our own day results are made known as they occur to the explorer's mind, and are put forward in a form which can never be considered final. There is a tendency to assign great weight to particular theories, simply because they are put forward. There is an uneasiness at knowing that on such points there can be any difference of opinion. There is an uncomfortable feeling of distrust in some minds.

My brethren, his faith must always be weak which rests upon details, and not upon the apprehension of a spiritual principle of life. The central object of the Christian faith is the Person of the Lord Jesus, in whom was made the supreme revelation of God's purpose to the world. No man's faith is secure unless it rests on Him, and has become vital by spiritual experience. Let us remember that the meaning of Christianity is this ; God manifested in Christ Jesus, who is to us the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

This is obvious enough in itself. But the appreciation of it greatly affects our attitude towards intellectual questions when they are raised. The Christian's belief is in a Person, Who is ever present with him, in Whose presence his life is lived, and by Whose aid his soul's activities are developed. The Bible is to him the divinely ordered record of that Person. In other words, we read our Bible that it may show us Christ, and that by prayerful study and meditation Christ may grow in our hearts by faith.

The Book which is thus intimately associated with our life and thought has an inherent sacredness. The Christian cannot regard it as like any other book. He shrinks from subjecting it to ordinary tests, or treating it in a cold and external manner. Yet this is precisely what he has had to endure, and what he cannot hope to escape.

If we ask how this situation comes about, we must answer that the mind of man is perpetually curious, and through its growing curiosity God trains us to a constant increase of knowledge. God created man after His own image, and gave him his faculties of body and mind that he should replenish the earth and subdue it. Every increase of knowledge gives man greater power over his surroundings. It is made, we cannot doubt it, in accordance with the will of God, and may be used for good or for evil. It is used for good if it re-inforces the spiritual and moral perceptions of man ; it is used for evil if it leads to arrogance and short-sighted

denial of God and His relation to man. That relation is summed up in the manifestation of the Lord Jesus ; and the Scriptures show us that manifestation and the steps which prepare the way for it. The contents of God's revelation made in the Bible are briefly—the preparation for Christ, the Coming of Christ, and the beginnings of Christ's Church ; or in other words, the history of Israel, the life of Christ, the doings and writings of His Apostles.

Now these are concerned with facts, facts which have a spiritual significance to the believer, but which also stand in relation to other facts of recorded history. Criticism is the attempt to determine that relation ; and in so doing it examines the records in which these facts are contained. The value of such an examination must always depend on the impartiality with which it is undertaken. Much of the criticism of the New Testament has been animated by the desire to explain away the miraculous element which it contains, by depriving the Gospels of the authority of contemporary records and representing them as the work of a later age with legendary accretions. Now if an ingenious writer begins with that intention, it is comparatively easy to put together a case. But the case only seems strong till it is answered. It is only after a lengthened controversy, when every available scrap of evidence has been carefully collected, interpreted in every possible way, weighed and judged from every side, that it is possible to determine the limits within which two opinions are tenable. It is enough to say that as regards the Gospels the controversy has driven their assailants nearer and nearer to the date of the authors to whom they are ascribed by tradition.

In recent years, however, criticism has been more busied with the Old Testament than with the New. It is obvious that the questions which may be raised concerning the Old Testament cover a much larger area than those which can be raised concerning the brief period which is covered by the New Testament. The Old Testament in fact contains the whole history and literature of a people. Those records and that literature possess a remarkable unity. They show a consciousness of a divine purpose running through human affairs and inspiring human thought. It is this consciousness of a purpose, becoming more and more definite in its expectation of a spiritual redemption, which gives them their eternal value to the Christian. But we must admit that, besides their religious significance, they possess also a vast historical importance, and have a unique literary value. They form a central point of interest for students of ancient history, of early institutions, and of the development of human thought. These are all studies which have an existence independent of religion. We cannot feel surprised that students

of these subjects should apply to the records contained in the Old Testament the same method of critical examination which they believe to have been fruitful of results as regards the records of the history of other nations.

But here I would say at once that all criticism is after all only conjectural. It depends partly upon a careful comparison of the written history with other similar records, with inscriptions, and the like. But it depends also largely on the assumption of a certain creative sympathy with past conditions, which enables the critic to weave together scattered hints into a connected system. His results can never be absolutely certain. They depend upon a point of view which is only probable, and which can only prove its probability by the ingenuity with which it weaves together established facts and slight indications. It can never rise beyond the level of a plausible hypothesis, liable to be upset by some new discovery, or by a more plausible hypothesis.

Now the criticism of Hebrew documents is rendered difficult by the absence of any data for comparison. We know the development of the English language, and we could recognise the arguments by which a particular document could be shown to belong to a particular date. But in the Hebrew writings any theory of literary development must depend on reasoning which is rarely beyond dispute. There may be a temporary agreement amongst scholars, but it rests upon too frail a foundation to become absolutely permanent. There is a charm about a luminous suggestion; but its luminousness often disappears. The human mind is hard to satisfy. One generation builds up and another pulls down. There can be no finality where there is no positive evidence available. No theory about the composition of the books of the Old Testament can at present be accepted as established. On some points I do not see how any theory can hope to win its way to undoubted acceptance. For instance, no evidence is available which will enable a decision about the authorship of the Psalms, so as to supersede authoritatively the traditional attribution.

Moreover, the important point about the history of Israel is its exhibition of the national consciousness. The Jewish historians set forth a Divine purpose running through human affairs. It is this interpretation of God's purpose in events, not the events themselves, which gives this record of a nation's life its religious significance. This remains untouched, whatever theory be adopted about the authorship and mode of composition of the records. This is admitted on all hands. The critics of the Old Testament do not attempt to deprive it of its religious importance as a Divine revelation. They are merely engaged in investigating the mode in which that revelation was made. Those who have

not been accustomed to such investigations shrink from them with a feeling of alarm at the audacity of the attempt. They have received the Bible as the Word of God. They may take courage by thinking that it will ever remain so. Analysis may, or may not, succeed in establishing its results about the mode in which the Old Testament came into its present shape. But it cannot, and does not undertake to account for the spiritual conceptions which it reveals. The Spirit of God spake to the spirit of man, "by divers portions and in divers manners." If God chooses that men should meditate on these manners, and endeavour to separate these portions, it is only the attempt to express in organised form what was implicitly felt by a writer in apostolic times.

For my own part I feel that God calls man to exercise his mental powers, and wills that we should "prove all things, and hold fast to that which is good." I would not venture to check enquiry, conducted in a reverent spirit, by rash assertion of its futility, or by appeals to ulterior considerations. I think that it is dangerous to maintain that we are bound to uphold the conception of the authorship of the Old Testament prevalent amongst the Jews at the time of our Lord, because on some occasions He spoke of it in the only way which was intelligible to those whom He addressed. This is a very large subject, requiring careful treatment, and opening up theological questions which have never yet received the judgment of the Church. The mystery of the Incarnation is an eternal verity whose significance we must keep intact. The records of past controversies show us the dangers which ensued from attempting to discern too rashly between the "very God and very man" in the Person of the Lord. He bore witness of the Scriptures that they testified of Him, that they constituted a Divine revelation. Their words were in His heart and in His mouth. His example forbids us from under-valuing their sacredness.

But I own I shrink from interpreting His language with reference to a question which is not religious, but scientific. If the criticism of the Old Testament was directed to prove that it was not the Word of God, that it contained no divine message for mankind, then the authority of Jesus would be final against such an attempt. But the criticism which we have in view aims merely at deciding—in accordance with certain principles, whose value has yet to be exactly determined—by what means and at what time the Old Testament came into its present form. Such an enquiry has only recently become possible. It seems to me dangerous to construct logical dilemmas, and involve the great doctrine of the Incarnation in passing controversy.

There are some minds which are impatient of anything that resembles suspended judgment: indeed suspended judgment is

impossible as regards vital principles. We must believe the Bible to be the Word of God, and Jesus to be the Word made flesh. But the relation of God's revelation in Scripture to God's perpetual revelation, which is being made in history and in life, is a matter which may be considered. Scripture has been interpreted in the past in various ways, and has been applied to the settlement of current questions according to prevailing modes of thought. Some of these modes of interpretation we now reject as unsound or partial. As a matter of fact no one part of man's knowledge can exist by itself. One truth is insensibly held in relation to other truths, and derives its vital power from the questions to which it is applied. These questions are raised for us. We are none of us individually responsible for them. They are there and must be answered. They are the heritage of our own age and of the special conditions among which our life is cast. Are we to say that this is accidental, or that it is God's purpose for us? A Christian cannot doubt about the answer to this question. He must assume the responsibility which devolves upon him, and submit to the discipline by which alone it can be discharged.

It is the temper of the present day to ask the question *How?* about all things. We can welcome such curiosity; but the point where we must be cautious is that the answer given to the question *How?* should not be confused with the answer to that other question *Why?* No investigation *how* the Scriptures are the will of God can answer the question *why* they are the will of God. That can be seen only by the spiritual consciousness, and the continuous record of that spiritual consciousness constitutes the authority of the Church.

That authority cannot be impaired unless the Church, on its side, undertakes to answer the question *How?* Such an attempt has not been made by the Church of England. It has no utterances to explain away, no positions which it is bound to maintain at all hazards. Its great process of reformation was carried out by the recognition of a growth of knowledge. It did not commit the fatal error of erecting a system, strong in an appearance of unchangeable organisation, possessed with an answer to every question, and claiming infallible authority. It laid down decidedly enough the truths of the Catholic faith, it retained every vestige of primitive practice and of primitive organisation; but it left ample room for liberty, and did not pretend to remove from the individual his due share of responsibility. The wisdom of that decision has been abundantly proved by its results. Anglican theology has been distinguished by its sound learning and its penetrating insight. No branch of the Church has made such weighty contributions to theological knowledge since the sixteenth century as has the Church of England. The temper of that Church is admirably adapted to foster theological development

on sound lines. I think that Biblical Criticism in England is being conducted in a reverential spirit; and though a certain amount of speculation must necessarily be rash, I think that the sense of responsibility is on the whole maintained. It is a subject of sincere thankfulness that controversy is conducted in the spirit of charity.

The Duty of the Clergy.

It is, I think, the duty of the clergy to attempt to estimate for themselves the general principles on which such criticism is conducted. If people are shocked and uneasy, it is because they are aware that a controversy is going on and do not know its exact bearings. The best answer to such uneasiness is an explanation of the points at issue. Really every reader of the Bible, however simple he may be, is an unconscious critic. He has favourite passages which seem to him to contain a special message for himself, special books which seem to him more luminous than others. Criticism is an attempt to explain on general principles how this comes to be the case. God's revelation was undoubtedly given in reference to current events of a distant past. Christ was manifested in a particular period of the world's history, and some of His teaching had reference to the facts before Him. The writings of the Apostles were called forth by the needs of the time in which they wrote. We have to gain our knowledge of God's will by its spirit, not by the letter. All Christian teaching involves a certain amount of interpretation, of transference, of application, which rests upon a basis of criticism. There is a sense in which criticism always has been, and always must be, a function of the Christian teacher; for he "is like a householder, who brings out of his treasures things new and old." He has to attach the Gospel message to the definite and existing needs of men. He has to show how it can answer their actual questions: he has to reveal the spiritual principles which underly their particular problems; he has to trace God's eternal purpose working itself out progressively in the apparently accidental circumstances of human affairs. "The Church of God," it has been finely said, "is mankind knowing and fulfilling its destiny."

Now, as a matter of practical conclusion, I think that it is well for the clergy to acquaint themselves with the methods pursued by Biblical critics, and to appreciate once for all the limitations inherent in the method itself. The true student knows how tentative and uncertain are his seeming conclusions; he does not always succeed in stating them with becoming modesty. He is habituated to the power of isolating a particular point: he is solving a puzzle by trying all possible solutions, and he publishes every ingenious attempt at a solution which occurs to him. Such attempted solutions are meant for experts who are engaged in a

similar process. The danger is that from time to time some of the rashest of these suggestions are suddenly popularised, and treated as though they were proved beyond doubt. The only answer to questions is to have some knowledge of the general method employed, so as to put the particular matter in its proper place and reduce it to due proportions.

But I do not think that these discussions are fitted for the pulpit : and I would dissuade my clergy from controversial sermons. The ordinary services of the Church are not the place for apologetics. Men come to Church that they may be built up in the faith, that they may have God and His law, Christ and His redemption, brought nearer to their souls by the Holy Spirit. Strength comes to them through the simple and straightforward utterances of a soul which is at peace with God, through the manifestation of a personality which they have seen active during the week, "coming in and going out among them," living in sympathy with the lives of others, striving to remove temptations, to console and uplift. They do not wish for discussions, however clever, of the questions of the day. These are ever with them—in the newspapers, in business, in talk. These are best treated in free discussion ; for they present themselves differently to every man, and do not admit of general answers. But all men long for a firmer hold on great principles, for the assurance of spiritual power, for warnings against temptation, for some spur to greater effort, for a higher and nobler view of life, its duties and its possibilities. If you give them this, they will thank you.

There is a tendency at the present day to undervalue preaching, and to substitute for it better music in Church, and greater zeal for practical work outside it. These are very well in their way : but they are not substitutes for preaching. Let sermons be shorter by all means. Everything now-a-days is shorter. The length of letters written twenty years ago fills us with amazement. We have learned to say what we have to say more directly and in fewer words. But brevity needs more careful preparation, and men wish for something pointed which comes home to them. There is much to be said if you would take pains in saying it. What life is teaching yourself is of value to others. Try to discover what that is and speak it out simply.

For assuredly "the Word of the Lord endureth for ever." His message comes from on high, and His Spirit only can carry it to men's hearts. It is yours to proclaim with human voice that message, and show its unending fitness to the needs of every soul.

V.

BRETHREN OF THE CLERGY AND CHURCHWARDENS OF THE
 DEANERIES OF ROTHWELL, HIGHAM FERRERS,
 AND WELDON.

The Church in which we are met to-day reminds us of our gains and of our losses. Since last you met within its walls it has been restored with exceptional thoroughness, and now stands in all its original dignity and completeness. But Canon Lindsay, who gave his energy to this work, and by his watchful care over the best interests of the place erected this Church into a monument which was intelligible to all who dwelt within its reach, was taken away before he could see the work finally accomplished. Surely this is a parable of much earnest work for God : it is done in singleness of heart : it is done for no personal motive : it is done ungrudgingly for the good of future generations. "If I can make life easier and better for those who are to come after me," such is the thought of many a faithful heart, "what matters my individual success ? The personal life is ever incomplete in its self-manifestation on earth. It is only lived in truth if it is freely given to God, that it may be woven into the divine purpose which runs through the world's activities." We think of other lives suddenly cut short, and workers removed from their labours. I would specially mention Sir Frederick Robinson, whose untimely loss we all deplore. But the work of God goes on, and we can take note of outward signs of its abiding power. Here in Kettering a Mission Room has been built and is the centre of a new congregation ; while another Church, the munificent gift of an unknown donor, is rapidly approaching completion. The Churches of Sudborough and Gretton have been restored. The interesting tower of Irthlingborough, which had to be taken down as a matter of precaution, has been again erected, and tells its tale of the love of the people for their parish Church and its surroundings. All these things are signs of progress and sources of encouragement.

BRETHREN OF THE CLERGY AND CHURCHWARDENS OF THE
DEANERIES OF TOWCESTER, BRACKLEY, AND
PRESTON.

In speaking to you who live in country parishes my mind is carried to the conspicuous example which you long had before you, of the various qualities for which the life of a country clergyman can afford a scope. By the death of Mr. Buckley the diocese lost its senior Rural Dean, and one of the most distinguished of its clergy. This is not the place to commemorate Mr. Buckley's learning, his eminent knowledge of books, and his vast store of valuable information. Not for these things do I bring him before you, but for the way in which he could follow all these pursuits and yet have leisure to interest himself in everything that concerned his neighbour, and to identify himself with his parishioners. It was because of his manifold interests that he was at home with everyone, and exercised an influence in many spheres. No one could know him without feeling better and wiser for it. He carried with him the useful lesson that breadth as well as intensity is necessary for the life and work of a clergyman; that the soul which is at one with God is by virtue of that union at one with all men; and can carry a subtle and penetrating influence wherever he goes. I speak of him because such a combination of qualities is growing rarer amongst us, and it is well that we should remember its value.

Changing Conditions of Rural England.

The change which is passing over the conditions of English life greatly affects the appearance of our rural parishes, and causes some anxiety about their future. They have been affected by economic changes of two kinds. One of these causes of change, the falling prices for agricultural products, is sufficiently recognised; but the other cause, though less spoken of, is equally serious—I mean the gradual extinction of all home industries. Never till our own day was the distinction between town and country a distinction resting entirely on the difference between industrial and agricultural employment: never before was the country inhabited almost exclusively by those engaged in tilling the soil. The development of machinery has led to the factory system becoming almost universal. There are very few occupations, except those concerned with agriculture,

which can now be carried on save in considerable centres of population. Industrial towns are everywhere growing: old country towns are losing their importance because their market is almost entirely for produce, and not for the results of local industry. Some villages favourably situated for industrial development are springing into towns; those not so situated show a declining population, and it is difficult to determine how much further that decline will go.

The prospect for the future which this state of things opens up affords wide room for speculation, in which it is not for me to indulge. I only wish to put before you the actual fact that England, broadly speaking, is rapidly being resolved into a number of larger and smaller industrial communities, for which the country districts are partly purveyors, and partly supply a stream of immigrants. The country is ceasing to have definite characteristics of its own, and more and more is becoming dependent on the towns. Consequently the nature of the duty and the aims of the country clergyman is changing also. He must expect to see many of his young men and women leave their homes and seek a career elsewhere: his diminishing population tends to consist more and more of the old and the young.

This fact points out that the great sphere of his activity must be his school. The country clergyman has an opportunity, which his brother in the town regretfully longs for, of knowing all his children individually, and of becoming their personal friend. I have met clergymen working in country parishes who lament that they have not more to do: on the other hand, I have met clergymen, who have quitted large town parishes for work in the country, who tell me that they have more to do in the country than they ever had to do in the town. Really the nature of a clergyman's work is boundless in its opportunities; and any watchful mind can find abundant scope for all its energies in carefully striving to promote the highest interests of any number, however small, of his fellows. Intimate knowledge develops sympathy and inspires mutual confidence. Each year the bond grows stronger, trustfulness increases, and deeper lessons are learned on both sides. No man can teach unless he also learns, and few opportunities are afforded of learning the great lessons of life which are comparable to those offered to the country clergyman. He has a great possibility of influencing for good the character of everyone in his parish, if only he will be patient and will persevere. He ought to know each child in his school, which he ought to visit, if not daily, yet at regular intervals in every week. He ought to be the friend and adviser of everyone in his parish without distinction of any kind. He ought to be ready and willing to be helpful for every purpose. I will only give one instance: he ought to take pleasure in furthering education such as is now offered by various

schemes of the County Councils. He might himself attend such lectures, and might be useful in giving hints to lecturers about the best methods of interesting an audience, whose peculiarities he has studied. It must be remembered that the art of lecturing to village audiences is yet in its infancy, and can only be developed by actual experiments. In guiding such experiments the help of the clergy may be invaluable. I certainly think that every clergyman ought to consider it one of his chief duties to forward in every way all attempts which are being made to widen popular interests and to create an intelligent interest in practical pursuits.

The Local Government Bill.

We all welcome the course of recent legislation which had for its object the extension of local self-government, which is the most primitive principle of English institutions. The simplification of its forms, and their adaptation to the growth of our parliamentary system, is a task which has just been accomplished. I hope and trust that the new organisation, which is soon to come into operation, will be successful in quickening interest in public affairs. It seems to me that the duties and obligations of citizenship cannot be satisfactorily discharged as regards national questions till the principles on which they rest have been learned in matters which are within the ken of the individual. Government ought not to be to any citizen something remote and inevitable. It should appear to him as the natural expansion of something which is already familiar to him on a small scale. He ought to recognise close at hand the motives, the principles, the methods, and the aims of those who claim to manage his affairs. He ought to learn by experience how mistakes are made in public business; he ought to appreciate the complexity of existing conditions, the emptiness of mere formulæ, and the value of integrity of purpose in administrative matters. Nothing has such a tendency to narrow a man's power of thought as a blind belief in the actions of government as being something inevitable, which are carried on automatically, and are outside any control with which he is familiar. We wish to moralise the action of the community. The first step towards this is to humanise it; and this can only be done by teaching every man to recognise his own responsibility in his own degree for the formation of that public opinion which is so irresistible. Nothing is so likely to teach fairmindedness as open discussion. Nothing is so sure to engender suspicion as a sense of personal helplessness and irresponsibility for what actually occurs. It is most necessary for political training that every community, however small, should have the possibility of common action within its power. There may, or may not be, much which it can do; but the whole community should know the reasons for

which what is done is done, and should recognise the justice of the limitations on its activity. The parish meeting will bring home to the mass of Englishmen the sense of responsibility, a sense which we wish to see fully developed and recognised.

Parochial Charities.

I do not mean to imply that this sense has not hitherto existed. It is, in fact, noticeable that the vestry meeting is a survival from times when local government was vigorous. The concerns of the parish Church were never removed from the control of the parishioners. Governmental centralisation never attempted to interfere with the local interest in the parish Church, which always was entrusted to the safe keeping of those for whom it was provided. Other local officials might be abolished, but Churchwardens remained. As they were the sole representatives of the parish, they had committed to them from time to time duties and trusts which were intended for the general welfare. Thus the office of overseers was conferred upon them by statute when the Poor Law first grew up round the organisation of the Church; and the management of charitable funds, which were intended to supplement the statutory provision, were naturally entrusted to them in many cases. Now, when the State undertook to reorganise and simplify local government, it was obvious that it should withdraw from these ancient officers all the powers which it had conferred on them, and everything which could fairly be considered as having accrued round their position as representatives of the parish. This was perfectly fair. But it was also obvious that, while the Churchwardens were officers of the parish, they were also officers of the Church: and while they were trustees of some bequests made to the parish, they were also trustees of other bequests which were made to the Church. It was necessary that an attempt should be made to discriminate between these two positions; and some consideration was requisite to prevent confusion. It is always well to have such points clearly determined beforehand, and a little care taken in time prevents misunderstanding afterwards. The desire to make the Act as intelligible as possible, and to free it from opportunities of contention, was surely laudable, and cannot fairly be represented as implying any opposition to the general principle on which it was framed. Of this I am certain that, so far as the Church can be said to have had any views of its own on this matter, its only desire was to have a clear and fair definition which would prevent disputes. I hope that the care which was bestowed on this point may prove to have been successful. I trust that there may be no difference of opinion in determining the division between parochial and ecclesiastical possessions in any of the parishes of this diocese. Of

course, trust deeds must be respected, and the duties of official trustees must be discharged. But I think we are all agreed that Parochial Charities had best be administered by a body elected with a view to that purpose.

I know that the clergy as a body are strongly of that opinion ; because they know from sad experience how difficult it is to distribute alms, however small, in a satisfactory manner. I do not mean only the patent and notorious fact that the existence of a Charity leads to exaggerated expectations, and that murmuring and disappointment follows upon any mode of disposing of it. In the earliest period of the Church, as soon as Christian charity came into existence, there was such a murmuring among the Christians of Jerusalem, that one body of the widows were neglected in the daily ministration. The Apostles discovered how great were the difficulties of satisfying everybody, and their action pointed out a general principle which has been somewhat forgotten. The moral which I draw from the appointment of the first Deacons is that a clergyman is as a rule exceptionally ill adapted to act as an almoner. The fact that he undertakes to discharge such a function, disturbs those frank relations which ought to exist between him and his people. I am not speaking of course of that spontaneous benevolence which flows from the sight of human misery, and stirs the beholder to do what he can to remedy it. This is inherent in human nature, and must be strong in every Christian heart. But I mean the official obligation to dispose of a certain sum, whether he thinks it needed or not, in a mode which he may not consider wise. There is nothing which requires more careful consideration, founded upon results of experience and a knowledge of social conditions, than the disposal of charitable funds in a really useful way. Their distribution by popularly-elected representatives will at all events lead to a keen criticism of the methods adopted, and will probably produce a wealth of suggestion on the part of those concerned.

We must recognise that charitable funds exist for the purpose of supplementing other agencies which are at work for the amelioration of social conditions. There was a time when these agencies were few, and were external to those who were affected by them. These agencies are now numerous, and many of them are within people's power to use. There are many Benefit Societies, and other means of making provision against sickness or misfortune. It is well that any distribution of charitable funds should be made in view of all the possibilities which were open ; that it should be made with a certain amount of publicity, and should be so made as to strengthen, and not to weaken, every existing machinery and every existing motive to self-help. The great object should be to alleviate suffering without injuring the mainsprings of effort, to succour the poor without promoting pauperism. This can best

be done by an elected body representing the experience and the sense of the community. I think that it is dangerous to trust entirely to compassion, which may be skilfully aroused by an unworthy person, and is gratified on the impulse of the moment. I think that we need to be weighted by responsibility in almsgiving; and that our personal feeling of compassion ought to be satisfied at our own expense, and not out of funds of which we are trustees. The educational advantage to be gained by experiments in the distribution of charity on public grounds is very large. The more the interest of the community is enlisted in the matter the better. There is no more valuable lesson to learn than the difficulty of doing good to others by means of money. It enforces the great truth that "a man's life develops from within." It brings home the fact that character is largely independent of conditions. It teaches men to distrust panaceas and seek for principles of social life. This is the spirit which we wish to see in all our villages. We wish to see the whole community united in the sense of a common life, eager to discover how that life can best be lived, finding a voice to express its needs, and learning by experience how they can best be supplied.

The Duty of the Clergy.

And in this movement and endeavour the people have a right, which my brethren will fully recognise, to look to the clergyman as their natural leader and adviser. He will always be ready to talk over matters, to explain possibilities, to devise means for gratifying every laudable desire, to compose little differences, to make for godly union and concord. If proposals be sometimes crude, he will seek out their real meaning and put it into form. He will strip them of their accidental and temporary surroundings, will sympathise with the thing aimed at, and will suggest some means for an experiment, the result of which all may loyally accept. The strength of a clergyman's position lies in the fact that he belongs to no class and to no party. It is his duty to consider only the general welfare, and seek out the principles on which it rests. If questions are unfortunately entangled in the complications of politics or of local jealousies and misunderstandings, he must be prepared patiently to unravel the real issues, and quietly to put aside what is irrelevant. We all know that misunderstandings generally arise from temper, and that in small communities it is hard to undo the results of a quarrel. Need I remind my brethren of their Ordination Vow, "to maintain and set forwards, as much as lieth in you, peace and love amongst all Christian people, and especially among them who are committed to your charge?" There is no reason why the pursuit of the common welfare should be an occasion of discord. There may

naturally be differences of opinion, but these can be composed by discussion, and the clergyman can do much to make that discussion assume a friendly form.

Much of the success of a new system depends on the way in which it is begun. I think it would be well to prepare beforehand for an administrative change of such importance. Acts of Parliament are not adapted for ordinary readers, and this particular Act contains a mass of complicated detail. I notice that its provisions have been explained in several Ruri-decanal Conferences, and some people have tried to make themselves masters of them. It would be a very useful step if the Act were explained to the people of every village, before it actually comes into operation. I do not say that the clergyman is in every case qualified for this task : but there are many laymen who would be glad to devote an evening to this purpose if asked ; and I recommend that where it is possible, their services should be used for that purpose. The audience should be encouraged to ask for explanations, and should be provided with material which they might talk over among themselves. I feel sure that such help would be greatly appreciated and would be of much value.

I have been asked by several of the clergy if I advise them to stand for election on the Parish or District Councils. I can only answer that this depends on two things : first, on their capacity for business. A clergyman may or may not be a man of business, and the object of the Council is to transact business. I do not think that an interest in the welfare of the parish is a sufficient qualification in itself, unless it is supported by some business capacity. A man must expect to be chosen with reference to the work which is to be done. But I think that every clergyman ought to be willing to render every service which he can to the community ; and if there is a widely-expressed desire that he should serve, I think that he ought to do so, even if his personal inclination is to abstain. If he declines, it ought to be on the ground that he is keenly aware of his incapacity, and thinks that there are others with greater qualifications than his own.

There is also another consideration which affects this question. It may be that an election is conducted on purely political lines. I need not say that a clergyman ought not to identify himself with either political party, and seem to be their nominee. As a citizen he has a right to his own opinions ; but in his official capacity he is bound to be impartial. He can only submit himself to election on general grounds ; and if party politics run so high that there is no room even for one independent candidate, then he will refuse to offer himself for the present. I would, however, point out that the Act enables the elected Council to appoint a chairman, "either from their own body or from other

persons qualified to be councillors of the parish." If the circumstances of the election are such that the clergyman cannot well become a candidate, it is still in the power of the Council, when the wave of excitement is over, to recognise his wisdom and seek the assistance of one who has declared his impartiality. But I would point out that, whether or no, the clergyman serves on the Parish Council, is a matter of small moment, and does not affect his responsibility to help in carrying out anything that is for the welfare of his people. In some cases he may feel that his influence for good is likely to be greater if he does not meddle with the actual details of administration. This must be left to his own judgment, with just the warning that the aloofness of a superior person is more apt to be misunderstood than anything else, and is on that account likely to be ineffective.

Ecclesiastical Buildings.

There is a point of practical importance which I hope that this new departure in local government will bring into prominence. It is the obscure and uncertain tenure of many parochial buildings and schools. I have already tried to call attention to this matter, and to provide a simple means of remedying deficiencies. The establishment of Diocesan Trustees was a matter of some difficulty ; but I would remind you that the diocese now possesses an organisation which can advise about trust deeds. I hope that this organisation will be used, and that anomalies will soon be rectified. A little care in time may prevent many difficulties in the future.

The Vestry.

The old Vestry with its meeting of parishioners still remains for the election of Churchwardens, and for the maintenance of the fabric of the Church. I regret that its constitution is not the same as that of the parish meeting, that it is a meeting of ratepayers, and not of those possessing parliamentary franchise, *i.e.* householders. I do not know how far select vestries prevail in this diocese. But I must own my own preference to see the vestry meeting put on the same basis as the parish meeting, and so enlist the sympathies of all in what concerns the Church. I feel quite sure that only those would attend who were interested in the business which was to be done, and that the election of the parish Churchwardens might well be left to the good sense of all the parishioners who were interested in it. I know what excellent service is rendered by Churchwardens, and I am glad to think that my personal acquaintance with them is constantly increasing. It is gratifying to see many who have discharged the duties of

that office for a long term of years, and are always ready to give their time to any necessary work, and to manage the secular business connected with the Church and its maintenance. That honourable office still remains unchanged, and appeals to the discretion and goodwill of faithful Churchmen.

Duty of the Clergy to Common Life.

I have spoken hitherto chiefly about the prospects of country parishes ; but the principles which I have endeavoured to embody in my remarks are of wider application. I have been setting before you one aspect of the Church's activity, an activity which has its field everywhere, that of promoting a vigorous and healthy common life. For the Church of Christ is a spiritual society planted amidst that natural society which has grown up in response to man's requirements, and aims at a just and orderly arrangement of human relationships. The wisdom by which this is achieved is the gift of God : the impulses which direct our common endeavour come also from God, and are largely due to the testimony which is borne by the Church of Christ. God's minister must not only declare that he is possessed of God's truth, but must strive to apply that truth to the manifold needs of men. The Gospel is a message of life, and life means consciousness of power. Anything that quickens and invigorates is sure in the long run to make for good. Nothing is so hopeless as the torpor of indifference. Any interest, however trivial, is better than no interest at all. "First that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual," is a principle of wide application. You are striving to lead those committed to your charge into the high regions of spiritual freedom, into the conscious exercise of those faculties of the soul wherewith God has endowed every man. It is a hard task, and you are frequently disappointed at the slowness of your progress. Think how God in His mercy dealt with you. Think of the influences which led you to the knowledge of His grace. You are the ministers of Him whose Spirit pleads with man ; you can only work by pleading with like persistence and humility. Regard all that happens as so many opportunities which God opens out for you. Look on the actual life and needs of men as divinely-ordered starting points for your endeavours. The Gospel has its message for every man ; how are you to bring it to him ? Not by starting from any system—which is the goal to which you hope to lead him in the end—but from his life, his needs, and his capacities. Improve the best that is in him. You will find that this is what God has done for you. Go with him in any effort to raise himself, to keep himself from temptation, to develop his powers. Let him feel that you are there, sympathising with all that is good in his endeavours, watching for the time

when you may speak the words of that great reconciliation which alone can give him peace. Christian love must be carried in faithful hearts to the market-place, to the recreation ground, to the home. If it is really within you it is always operative, always exercising its attractive power, softening, restraining, purifying. No part of your activity is needless ; no good object is without its reward. Unexpected results flow from apparently trivial causes. May I give one instance of my meaning ? It has been found that teaching factory girls gymnastics, and training them in musical drill, has not only supplied them with healthy recreation, but has been found most valuable in giving them a decided gait and carriage, and so doing away with that listless and loitering appearance which exposed them to the temptations of the streets.

Nothing is unimportant in God's eyes. Nothing that makes for good should be unimportant in the eyes of God's minister. He works through small things to great. If he does so, he has his reward ; for he sees a perpetual revelation of God, and new possibilities are continually opening before him of publishing the mystery—or open secret—"which is Christ in you, the hope of glory : whom we proclaim, admonishing every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ."

VI.

MY BRETHREN OF THE CLERGY AND CHURCHWARDENS OF
THE DEANERIES OF RUTLAND.

It is somewhat surprising to me to reflect that during the three years of my episcopate no fewer than thirteen of the forty-one benefices which are contained in Rutland have changed hands, and two of them twice. Several of these changes were due to resignations, necessitated by infirmity. Many of those who died deeply regretted were called away in a ripe old age. Nevertheless the neighbourhood feels the loss of such men as Mr. Wingfield and Mr. Knox. But Mr. Gibb was summoned from his labours in the fulness of his vigour. Mr. Mangan passed away with startling suddenness, and Mr. Hilton showed no signs of bodily weakness when it pleased God to call him from his work. We can but take note of these things, praying with all humility to Almighty God that we may be able to tender an account of our stewardship with the same clear conscience as we believe was enjoyed by our brethren who have gone before.

The district which you represent has to face no serious problems arising from rapid increase of population. Your work is that of steady building up the people committed to you, while you maintain, and labour to increase, every agency for good. I am glad to see that much has been done to repair and adorn the fabric of the Churches in many parishes. The Chancel of Hambledon Church has been rebuilt on a scale of magnificence which we admire, and highly esteem the pious purpose which prompted such an offering. It is a source of great satisfaction to me to know that the fine Church of Empingham is to be thoroughly restored largely by the generosity of one who has long been intimately associated with the parish, and has its welfare much at heart. I am glad to think that the project was no sooner mooted than the necessary funds were forthcoming by the ready co-operation of another who is connected with the parish. The only Church which is reported to me as needing speedy repair is that of Greetham.

The Worship of God.

The main purpose for which the Church of Christ exists is the worship of God. On this foundation every form of its external activity must rest. We may discuss the relation of Christian principles to various points of social organisation. We may consider the intellectual questions which they raise. We may measure their influence, and may meditate how that influence is to be applied and intensified. But these after all are outlying matters. The clergy may develop many forms of activity, but the supreme duty which devolves upon them is to set forth the worship of God. It is only with characters and tempers formed under the purifying and sanctifying influence of worship that they will affect society, and carry into the world the sense of God's presence. Whatever a clergyman may find to do must begin and end in the House of God and its offices. Thence flows the Spirit which animates his work : thither he returns to offer all that he has attempted to Him Who is the only source of all his strength.

It cannot be too clearly understood in this day, when manifold suggestions are rife, that it is the great duty of the Church to uphold the worship of God, and to teach men to draw nigh to Him through Jesus Christ. The Church is the witness to God's presence in the world, and sets forth the means whereby He has appointed that mankind should approach Him. Before men can see God in the world, in society, in human life and character, they must see Him in Himself.

The great duty of a minister of God is to set forth God, as the object of men's devotion. What can we do to discharge that duty more fully ? For it must be admitted that it is exceedingly necessary in this our day to maintain the basis of religion in its due place. There is a tendency in an age of rapid progress, to dwell on the latest development of thought or feeling, to be anxious about special problems, to be busy with particular forms of the adaptation of truth. This is well enough ; but true progress must ever carry with it all that it has gained. In the complication of its ornamentation of the upper storeys, it must not forget the care of the foundations on which all the fabric stands. The quickening of human sympathies ought to go on side by side with deepening awe and reverence for God. We cannot afford to dwell on the love of God till we have steadied our minds by the fear of God. The perception of man's true place in the world, the very basis for an estimate of the force at his disposal, the grounds of our judgments or of our hopes—all these flow from the worship of God, and have their source in the services of His House. The service of man without the service of God becomes an intolerable burden. Hopefulness in

the long run is only possible for one who prays. The saying of the Psalmist of old is profoundly true, and reproduces itself in the consciousness of every thoughtful man who looks around upon the world: "These things were too hard for me until I went into the house of the Lord: then I understood." Again I say, there can be no fruitful work which is not founded on the sense of being somehow God's fellow-worker; and this sense is created and sustained by the power of worship, by the insight which we gain into apparent contradictions as we submit ourselves to God's Holy Spirit, by the extended outlook which we win from the uplifting of our soul.

Open Churches and Daily Services.

So would I speak to you of what we can do to extend the spirit of worship: to make it real and penetrating, a perpetual influence, and a transforming power. Let me dwell on a few points of practical importance which are within your power. First of all, we possess a magnificent heritage, a deposit of the spiritual aspirations of past generations, in the beautiful Churches, with which England as a whole, and I may add this diocese in an exceptional degree, is adorned. Those fabrics are messengers of spiritual truth, perpetually set before the eyes of men. I am glad to think that everywhere this truth is felt in more or less degree. Men are always proud of their parish Church, and are willing to make sacrifices for its sake. This feeling should be carefully cherished, as a basis for further teaching. The Clergyman is the official guardian of the fabric of the Church; and its neatness within and without depend upon his carefulness. The surroundings of the Church are as important as the structure itself. A trim garden looks ill beside an ill-kept Churchyard. I am glad to think that there are no remaining instances of a comfortable parsonage beside a dilapidated Church.

If the Church itself be a perpetual sermon, you must do all that you can to give it point and to enforce its application. There are two ways in which this can be done, two plain methods which I would like to think were universally adopted. The Church must not only be cared for, but must be used. People must be exhorted to feel that it is their Church, open always for their use, ready with its suggestiveness at every crisis of their life, having a message for all their needs. We are maiming the meaning and usefulness of our Churches, if they are kept closed from one Sunday night till the next Sunday morning. We are directly teaching that religion is a matter for Sunday services, and is not vitally connected with our week-day life. I am very strongly of opinion that every Church should be open and accessible to all at all times of every day. I know all that can be

said against this suggestion. I know that people rarely use the Church when it is open. Can it be expected that the habit will grow up at once? I know all that is said about inconveniences, and dangers of loss, or of irreverence. My only answer is: You may have some cases of foolish conduct sometimes; but then they give you an opportunity of speaking on the subject directly, which may be of incalculable use. There is perhaps no point on which you would be so sure of carrying everybody's sympathy with you: and to fan men's latent feeling of reverence into conscious expression is a most real advance. But I do not think that there is any real danger to be apprehended,—and I speak with some knowledge. For many years past I have been in the habit of examining parish Churches in various parts of England. I have gained considerable knowledge of the way in which they are cared for, and used. In my experience I should say roughly that about half the parish Churches stand open; that those which stand open are much better cared for than those which do not; that they are as a rule more highly decorated, and might be supposed to have more to fear from mischief; that I can discover no peculiarities of position or of local conditions which determines the matter, but apparently only the feeling of the clergyman; that where the Church is open, there is generally affixed to the door a notice to that effect, with a request that anyone entering the Church would pray for himself and for the parish. I think that a mere notice on the Church door "This Church is open for prayer and meditation" is of inestimable value as asserting the place which these two things ought to hold in the life of every Christian. Let me repeat; the Church itself is the first and most visible instrument of Christian teaching: it ought to be used to the full, and its meaning emphasised with all distinctness: let it be open at all times to all men.

But if the people are to be taught to use their Church, the clergyman must not only afford them opportunities, but must set them an example. The daily saying of Morning and Evening Prayer in Church is of great importance. Again I know all that can be said by one who prefers to say them privately, because he is hopeless of being joined by any of his parishioners in Church. But the fact remains that you are directed to say them in Church, unless you are reasonably let or hindered: and the absence of others is certainly no hindrance to you. But I would call your attention to some definite points of practical value. You are trying to teach your people to pray: can you be doing your best if you do not bring it before them as a privilege, which you yourself enjoy to exercise? You may go about your parish and exhort to prayer: you may pray with the sick and those in calamity; but you will best enforce your lessons by your example. The sound of the bell, especially when the listener knows that it

is being rung by your own hands, if it does not operate as a summons, is yet a reminder, and brings a message of consolation and encouragement. It is well that you should pray with your people ; it is well that they should know that you also pray for them. And I think there are few cases in which daily prayers are said in Church where a few pious souls do not gather occasionally after a time.

There are also other reasons of much importance for daily services—reasons which affect the usefulness of a country clergyman. It is of great service to himself that he should have some regular and fixed points in his daily work in his parish. It is inevitable from the nature of a clergyman's duties that they should be left to his own discretion, and that the times of their performance should be at his own choice. The first thing that every man ought to strive to do is to be a law unto himself, and to economise his time by the formation of habits for its allotment. The existence of fixed points for daily Morning and Evening Prayer is a great help, and enables him to adjust other things accordingly. A regular hour for Church leads to a regular visit to the school. For the same reason it is a great help to his people. It vastly increases his accessibility, which is a matter of no little importance. Villagers are often shy ; and many, who wish to see you, will not go so far as call upon you through a dread of clothing their question with undue importance in the eyes of others ; but if they know that you are almost always at Church at fixed hours twice a day, they know where and when you can easily be found and have a means of familiar intercourse which nothing else can give.

Again, the fact that you show yourself to have definite duties at definite hours assimilates your life to theirs, and makes the nature and aim of your work much more comprehensible to their minds. They can understand that a man is caring for them in very deed when they see him daily going regularly to the Church and the school, so setting before them the unmistakable outlines of a life devoted to prayer and teaching.

The Clergyman as a Teacher.

And the true teacher is also the constant learner. The life which is built upon regular habits economises time and generates energy which can be usefully applied in manifold ways. The clergyman of a country parish has time to spare, which he can devote to many profitable purposes. He may be interested in affairs, local and diocesan, and may be able to lend practical help to the vast machinery by which the world's business has perforce to be carried on. He may be a student, and so able to carry far beyond his immediate sphere the spirit of his desire to do good

service. Some form of interest, profitable to ourselves and others, it is well that all of us should strive to acquire, outside the work immediately committed to us. No man should always harp upon one string ; all should have a resource within themselves which is sufficiently strong to prevent them from being entirely under the influence of their daily work. The incumbent of a country parish might well regard it as a positive duty to have a pursuit which enabled him to serve the Church beyond the limits of his own immediate sphere.

I need not remark on the inevitable inequality of population between parishes, though this inequality is not so great as it seems at first sight. In the dense population of a town the clergyman's sphere of work is definitely limited. There are many agencies at work : he has his own work to do, and can refer to other sources for help in all save his spiritual functions. But in the country it is otherwise : and the country clergyman, who will do his best, soon learns that he must be resourceful, and that there is a steady demand on his energies in unexpected ways. He should be ready to turn his hand to anything that is needed, and should fit himself to be the adviser of his people in the difficulties which are inherent in their actual life. There is much which he ought to try and learn for their sakes. But still, that demand is not continuous, and he has leisure to devote to purposes of his own.

The pressure upon the town clergyman for active work, the demand upon his time by the constant growth of new organisations, the constant discovery of new openings as life becomes more complex, affect him perhaps in no way more injuriously than by curtailing his time and his capacity for study. Yet study is a definite part of a clergyman's duty, undertaken solemnly at Ordination, and binding upon him as an obligation. I think that in this matter he may fairly look to his brethren in the country for help. There ought to be many of them who are practised theologians, pursuing special branches of the subject, and able from time to time to take a survey of some phase of modern thought. I have endeavoured to put this object before you by suggesting the delivery of theological lectures at convenient centres in the diocese. I think that for the purpose of such lectures a diocese might well become self-supporting, and that the ranks of the country clergy ought to supply men who are able to bring the products of their greater leisure to the use of their more busily-occupied brethren.

There are, further, other purposes of a less ambitious kind to which attention might be devoted. Popular lectures and addresses of various kinds are needed in many parishes, and might be supplied by a little organisation. It is not a severe tax upon any man to undertake one subject at least in the year, and offer his services

to his brethren. I would merely instance one subject on which such labour would seem to me to be particularly profitable. The subject of Foreign Missions seems to me to be one on which people are very inadequately informed. It is generally left to missionary meetings held under the auspices of a particular Society. I do not undervalue such meetings or the impressions which they produce. But their object is to awaken interest in the Society rather than to give connected information. I do not propose to meddle with them, but I would like to see them supplemented in a systematic way. Why should not some of the clergy in each Deanery undertake to study, each of them, the history of one particular mission, so as to be able to give a consecutive account of the country, the people, the nature of the missionary work, its progress and its prospects? In this way interest in missions would be carried further than it is at present, and would rest upon a more intelligent basis. It would be associated with an amount of geographical and ethnological information which would be greatly appreciated. It would tend to put missionary enterprise in its relation to the progress of civilisation, and might be used to teach lessons of universal application. The lecturer himself would find the advantage of having a definite object before him, and would feel a stimulus to direct his general reading. An interchange of such lectures would provide a ready means of supplying profitable instruction for winter's evenings in adjoining parishes.

Parochial History.

There is another subject with which every clergyman who enjoys leisure ought to try and make himself conversant—I mean the history of his own parish and district. I speak as one who remembers that one of my predecessors in this See—Bishop White Kennett—was as a parish priest, almost the founder of the study of parochial antiquities, a subject which has owed much to the industry and zeal of the clergy, and one which has been naturally relegated to their care. It is a subject of great interest and of great value for the increase of historical knowledge. But I am not putting it before you on that ground, but on its utility for the purpose of broadening the interests of your people. Interest begins in that which is close at hand. Historic sites and landmarks, the fortunes of families, the architectural growth of your Parish Church, the ancient manor and its customs, the enclosure of common lands, the traces of previous modes of cultivation—anything which tells the story of the long process by which the place in which they live came to be what it now is—appeals at once to the mind. It is well that men should know the value of the heritage which they now enjoy, and so should feel their responsibility for its maintenance and improvement. It is well

that they should know the influences which moulded the past, and should be taught their abiding force. In a country village especially, teaching cannot be confined to the pulpit, but must be carried into every profitable sphere. Simple talk with simple folk about things which interest yourself is always sure to be appreciated, and will be profitable for good to yourself as well as to them. Whatever your personal interests may be—and every man ought to have some—make them available to those around you. A country parish is only an extended family, and each should contribute his best to the good of all. It is by identifying your life with that of your people that you will best succeed in teaching them the high truths entrusted to your care. To them all else leads up, and by them everything is illumined.

Clerical Incomes.

There is one personal matter affecting the country clergy on which I would wish to say a few words, the depreciation of clerical incomes. Few parts of England have suffered more severely from agricultural depression than this. Yet I must express my surprise and admiration at the fortitude with which the result has been borne by the clergy at large. Where all have suffered they have been unwilling to urge any exceptional claims, though the loss has undoubtedly weighed exceptionally on them. They have been content to share without complaint the misfortunes of their neighbours. I was of opinion that something should be done to help cases of genuine hardship; and the Diocesan Conference last year agreed to the formation of a Sustentation Fund to aid impoverished benefices. It would seem, however, that there is not much belief in the possibility of dealing with this matter by means of a central fund. It is, I gather, judged more advisable to deal with such cases either by the permanent augmentation of the endowment of small benefices, or by the union of two when their separate revenues are inadequate, or by providing for them by local effort. Anyhow, the contributions which have been received for the purpose are very slight, amounting only to £332, of which £200 comes from one source. I notice also that only 12 Churches in the Diocese have appropriated any part of their contributions to the Diocesan Society towards this object.

I can only infer that the clergy as a body are unwilling to plead exceptional poverty. I know that his clerical income rarely forms the entire maintenance of the clergyman, who generally gives his services without question of exact remuneration. I have been cheered by many instances of unworldliness, and of a single-hearted desire to find only a sphere for service. Men have told me repeatedly of accessions to their private means as reasons why

they could afford to go to ill-paid parishes. Curates have voluntarily waived their stipends that more workers might be supplied in large parishes. Men labour on without repining, and ask for no recognition for work, which is to a large extent voluntary.

My clerical brethren will not be surprised at this, and may wonder why I mention it. I do so, because I think it is sometimes well that such facts should be recorded—that men should know how much quiet heroism is enlisted in the service of God's Church. That service has lost none of its attraction and none of its power ; for it brings the soul into constant intimacy with other souls ; it deals not with what is superficial and transitory, but what is eternal in the life of man. It reveals new signs of God's purposes, and of the operations of His Spirit ; it shows the dignity and splendour, if it also shows the littleness and misery, of humanity. The smallest sphere is infinitely large ; and the training of a few in an out-of-the way village ranks with God as high and as holy as the wider activity of which the world takes note. Happy is he who in his country parish never forgets this truth, but strong in the simplicity which comes from communing with God walks amongst his people, as in very truth a minister of life, life which begins here but lasts for ever, life whose power is increasingly perceived.

For be assured of this : a country parish is a severe test of a man's absolute reality. Powers of eloquence, of organisation, of business capacity, will avail nothing, unless they flow from a heart devoted to God. Criticism is keener in a country village than in a large town. Every part of your life is lived in public, is scanned and commented on. You belong entirely to your people, and can win them only by your absolute sincerity. You must be their friend before you can be their teacher. Such a work requires your best energies constantly employed. "All service ranks the same with God," and with Him "there is no last nor first." May He of His mercy write this lesson on the hearts of all us and enable us evermore to keep Him before our eyes in all that we do and say.

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